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A KING OF NAVARRE MAKING AN INCURSION INTO CASTILE.
Page 114.

Montezuma Edition

BIOGRAPHICAL

AND

Critical Miscellanies

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WILFRED HAROLD MUNRO

PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY IN BROWN UNIVERSITY

VOL. I

LONDON

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION

THE volume of Biographical and Critical Miscellanies was published when Prescott had attained an international reputation. It was sent to the press not because of any intrinsic merit in the essays themselves, but because their author rightly judged that the reading public, especially in England, would like to peruse some of his earliest productions, and to compare them with his later works. The English edition, which contains all the papers except the review of Ticknor's History of Spanish Literature, was published in 1845.

As one studies the Miscellanies to-day he realizes fully the force of Daniel Webster's oft-quoted remark when, after the publication of the "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" he characterized Prescott as "a comet which had suddenly blazed out upon the world in full splendor." They are exceedingly interesting to the historical student who desires to compare the reviews of the first half of the last century with those of the present day. But if any one, when they were first published, had ventured to predict that their author would, before his death, become the most famous of American historians, the prediction would have been received with consid-

erable incredulity, to say the least. Not that the reviews are unworthy of respect, but because they only vaguely indicate the genius that Prescott possessed.

The earliest article (upon Italian Narrative Poetry) was published in 1824, when Prescott was twenty-eight years old. All but those upon Sir Walter Scott, Châteaubriand's English Literature, Bancroft's United States, Madame Calderon's Life in Mexico, and Ticknor's Spanish Literature appeared before the "Ferdinand and Isabella" was sent to the printer, and all except the review of Ticknor's volumes appeared before the publication of the "Conquest of Mexico" (the historian's second work), in October, 1843.

Prescott devoted much time and labor to the preparation of his reviews, but he was never especially successful in that field of work. His style is formal and lifeless. He rarely warms to his subject and he discovers little historical imagination. It is impossible to imagine the author of Italian Narrative Poetry ever writing the entrancing account of the Triste Noche. All his historical works were sold because of their exceeding merit. The volume of reviews was sold because of its author's great reputation. How great that reputation was its large sale testifies. If the nine oldest essays had been published in book form before the "Ferdinand and Isabella" had made their author known to the public, their publisher would have had a lot of dead stock upon

his hands. All the essays manifest large learning, but the earlier ones show that their author was unusually modest in his estimate of his own powers, and especially of the value of his judgment as a critic. Moreover, he seems weighed down by the knowledge of the low esteem in which all "British-American" work was held by the great reviewers on the other side of the Atlantic. This is notably true in the case of the oldest essay (Italian Narrative Poetry). We discern in it few indications of its author's ability to write history. It is impossible for the average reader to become deeply interested in it. It appeals to specialists only—to those conversant with the subject of which it treats. The second in point of age, "Da Ponte's Observations," is interesting mainly because it shows us what Prescott was (and was not) able to accomplish in a controversial way.

That upon Molière is admirable. We see in it the first beams of the luminary that was nine years later to blaze upon the world. The next review is upon Irving's Conquest of Granada. Irving's field was one in which Prescott had already for some time been working. In its thirty and more pages the reader will find three pages with some mention of Irving's authorities, but he will seek in vain for its author's opinion of Irving's work. This is probably due to the fact that Prescott was distrustful of the value of his own critical judgment. Twelve years later, when the

world had expressed in no uncertain language its approval of the author of "Ferdinand and Isabella," he does not hesitate to commend in very emphatic terms Bancroft's "History of the United States."

The article upon the "Asylum for the Blind" has a pathetic interest because of the condition of Prescott's own eyes. It is really an earnest plea for a wider recognition of the immense work accomplished by those to whom the visible world is a sealed book.

The biographical article upon Charles Brockden Brown was written in two weeks' time. It commands attention as a biography, but is not specially valuable as a criticism of Brown's literary work. Jared Sparks, editor of the series of American Biographies for which it was written, thought its author generalized too much. Prescott himself found that he had indulged in too much eulogy. Many critics have since judged that much of his eulogy was misplaced.

The last review, upon Ticknor's History of Spanish Literature, was written in 1852, shortly after its author's return from Europe. He was then at the height of his fame, and had been lionized in England as no American historian ever had been before. The judgment of the world had placed him in the front rank of the historical writers of the century. He knew that he might confidently express his own opinions and that few would venture to question their value. The temp-

tation to high eulogy was great. For years Ticknor had been his intimate friend. Prescott knew how thorough his friend's work had always been, and how valuable the results of his labors were. For almost a generation he had been studying the general history of the country of which the literary historian wrote. His review is commendatory in the highest degree, but it is justly so. It is an admirable characterization of what Ticknor had accomplished, and its verdict of unqualified approval has been sustained by the judgment of the whole critical world.

WILFRED H. MUNRO.

BROWN UNIVERSITY,
April 2, 1906.

BIOGRAPHICAL
AND
CRITICAL MISCELLANIES

MEMOIR OF

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

THE AMERICAN NOVELIST*

THE class of professed men of letters, if we exclude from the account the conductors of periodical journals, is certainly not very large, even at the present day, in our country; but before the close of the last century it was nearly impossible to meet with an individual who looked to authorship as his only, or, indeed, his principal, means of subsistence. This was somewhat the more remarkable, considering the extraordinary development of intellectual power exhibited in every quarter of the country, and applied to every variety of moral and social culture, and formed a singular contrast with more than one nation in Europe, where literature still continued to be followed as a distinct profession, amid all the difficulties resulting from an arbitrary government and popular imbecility and ignorance.

Abundant reasons are suggested for this by the various occupations afforded to talent of all kinds, not only in the exercise of political functions, but in the splendid career opened to enterprise of every description in our free and thriving community. We were in the morning of life, as it

* From Spark's American Biography, 1834.

were, when everything summoned us to action; when the spirit was quickened by hope and youthful confidence; and we felt that we had our race to run, unlike those nations who, having reached the noontide of their glory or sunk into their decline, were naturally led to dwell on the soothing recollections of the past, and to repose themselves, after a tumultuous existence, in the quiet pleasures of study and contemplation. "It was amid the ruins of the Capitol," says Gibbon, "that I first conceived the idea of writing the History of the Roman Empire." The occupation suited well with the spirit of the place, but would scarcely have harmonized with the life of bustling energy and the thousand novelties which were perpetually stimulating the appetite for adventure in our new and unexplored hemisphere. In short, to express it in one word, the peculiarities of our situation as naturally disposed us to active life as those of the old countries of Europe to contemplative.

The subject of the present memoir affords an almost solitary example, at this period, of a scholar, in the enlarged application of the term, who cultivated letters as a distinct and exclusive profession, resting his means of support, as well as his fame, on his success, and who, as a writer of fiction, is still farther entitled to credit for having quitted the beaten grounds of the Old Country and sought his subjects in the untried wilderness of his own. The particulars of his unostentatious life have been collected with sufficient industry by his friend Mr. William Dunlap, to whom our native literature is under such large

obligations for the extent and fidelity of his researches. We will select a few of the most prominent incidents from a mass of miscellaneous fragments and literary lumber with which his work is somewhat encumbered. It were to be wished that, in the place of some of them, more copious extracts had been substituted from his journal and correspondence, which doubtless, in this as in other cases, must afford the most interesting as well as authentic materials for biography.

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN was born at Philadelphia, January 17th, 1771. He was descended from a highly respectable family, whose ancestors were of that estimable sect who came over with William Penn to seek an asylum where they might worship their Creator unmolested in the meek and humble spirit of their own faith. From his earliest childhood Brown gave evidence of his studious propensities, being frequently noticed by his father, on his return from school, poring over some heavy tome, nothing daunted by the formidable words it contained, or mounted on a table and busily engaged in exploring a map which hung on the parlor wall. This infantine predilection for geographical studies ripened into a passion in later years. Another anecdote, recorded of him at the age of ten, sets in a still stronger light his appreciation of intellectual pursuits far above his years. A visitor at his father's having rebuked him, as it would seem, without cause, for some remark he had made, gave him the contemptuous epithet of "boy." "What does he mean," said the young philosopher, after the

guest's departure, "by calling me boy? Does he not know that it is neither size nor age, but sense, that makes the man? I could ask him a hundred questions, none of which he could answer."

At eleven years of age he was placed under the tuition of Mr. Robert Proud, well known as the author of the History of Pennsylvania. Under his direction he went over a large course of English reading, and acquired the elements of Greek and Latin, applying himself with great assiduity to his studies. His bodily health was naturally delicate, and indisposed him to engage in the robust, athletic exercises of boyhood. His sedentary habits, however, began so evidently to impair his health that his master recommended him to withdraw from his books and recruit his strength by excursions on foot into the country. These pedestrian rambles suited the taste of the pupil, and the length of his absence often excited the apprehensions of his friends for his safety. He may be thought to have sat to himself for this portrait of one of his heroes. "I preferred to ramble in the forest and loiter on the hill; perpetually to change the scene; to scrutinize the endless variety of objects; to compare one leaf and pebble with another; to pursue those trains of thought which their resemblances and differences suggested; to inquire what it was that gave them this place, structure, and form, were more agreeable employments than ploughing and threshing." "My frame was delicate and feeble. Exposure to wet blasts and vertical suns was sure to make me sick." The fondness for these solitary rambles

continued through life, and the familiarity which they opened to him with the grand and beautiful scenes of nature undoubtedly contributed to nourish the habit of revery and abstraction, and to deepen the romantic sensibilities from which flowed so much of his misery, as well as happiness, in after-life.

He quitted Mr. Proud's school before the age of sixteen. He had previously made some small poetical attempts, and soon after sketched the plans of three several epics, on the discovery of America and the conquests of Peru and Mexico. For some time they engaged his attention to the exclusion of every other object. No vestige of them now remains, or, at least, has been given to the public, by which we can ascertain the progress made towards their completion. The publication of such immature juvenile productions may gratify curiosity by affording a point of comparison with later excellence. They are rarely, however, of value in themselves sufficient to authorize their exposure to the world, and, notwithstanding the occasional exception of a Pope or a Pascal, may very safely put up with Uncle Toby's recommendation on a similar display of precocity, "to hush it up, and say as little about it as possible."

Among the contributions which, at a later period of life, he was in the habit of making to different journals, the fate of one was too singular to be passed over in silence. It was a poetical address to Franklin, prepared for the Edentown newspaper. "The blundering printer," says

Brown, in his journal, "from zeal or ignorance, or perhaps from both, substituted the name of Washington. Washington, therefore, stands arrayed in awkward colors; philosophy smiles to behold her darling son; she turns with horror and disgust from those who have won the laurel of victory in the field of battle, to this her favorite candidate, who had never participated in such bloody glory, and whose fame was derived from the conquest of philosophy alone. The printer, by his blundering ingenuity, made the subject ridiculous. Every word of this clumsy panegyric was a direct slander upon Washington, and so it was regarded at the time." There could not well be imagined a more expeditious or effectual recipe for converting eulogy into satire.

Young Brown had now reached a period of life when it became necessary to decide on a profession. After due deliberation, he determined on the law,—a choice which received the cordial approbation of his friends, who saw in his habitual diligence and the character of his mind, at once comprehensive and logical, the most essential requisites for success. He entered on the studies of his profession with his usual ardor; and the acuteness and copiousness of his arguments on various topics proposed for discussion in a law-society over which he presided bear ample testimony to his ability and industry. But, however suited to his talents the profession of the law might be, it was not at all to his taste. He became a member of a literary club, in which he made frequent essays in composition and eloquence. He

kept a copious journal, and by familiar exercise endeavored to acquire a pleasing and graceful style of writing; and every hour that he could steal from professional schooling was devoted to the cultivation of more attractive literature. In one of his contributions to a journal, just before this period, he speaks of "the rapture with which he held communion with his own thoughts amid the gloom of surrounding woods, where his fancy peopled every object with ideal beings, and the barrier between himself and the world of spirits seemed burst by the force of meditation. In this solitude, he felt himself surrounded by a delightful society; but when transported from thence, and compelled to listen to the frivolous chat of his fellow-beings, he suffered all the miseries of solitude." He declares that his intercourse and conversation with mankind had wrought a salutary change; that he can now mingle in the concerns of life, perform his appropriate duties, and reserve that higher species of discourse for the solitude and silence of his study. In this supposed control over his romantic fancies he grossly deceived himself.

As the time approached for entering on the practice of his profession, he felt his repugnance to it increase more and more; and he sought to justify a retreat from it altogether by such poor sophistry as his imagination could suggest. He objected to the profession as having something in it immoral. He could not reconcile it with his notions of duty to come forward as the champion indiscriminately of right and wrong; and he con-

sidered the stipendiary advocate of a guilty party as becoming, by that very act, participator in the guilt. He did not allow himself to reflect that no more equitable arrangement could be devised, none which would give the humblest individual so fair a chance for maintaining his rights as the employment of competent and upright counsel, familiar with the forms of legal practice, necessarily so embarrassing to a stranger; that, so far from being compelled to undertake a cause manifestly unjust, it is always in the power of an honest lawyer to decline it, but that such contingencies are of most rare occurrence, as few cases are litigated where each party has not previously plausible grounds for believing himself in the right, a question only to be settled by fair discussion on both sides; that opportunities are not wanting, on the other hand, which invite the highest display of eloquence and professional science in detecting and defeating villany, in vindicating slandered innocence, and in expounding the great principles of law on which the foundations of personal security and property are established; and, finally, that the most illustrious names in his own and every other civilized country have been drawn from the ranks of a profession whose habitual discipline so well trains them for legislative action and the exercise of the highest political functions.

Brown cannot be supposed to have been insensible to these obvious views; and, indeed, from one of his letters in later life, he appears to have clearly recognized the value of the profession he

had deserted. But his object was, at this time, to justify himself in his fickleness of purpose, as he best might, in his own eyes and those of his friends. Brown was certainly not the first man of genius who found himself incapable of resigning the romantic world of fiction and the uncontrolled revels of the imagination for the dull and prosaic realities of the law. Few, indeed, like Mansfield, have been able so far to constrain their young and buoyant imaginations as to merit the beautiful eulogium of the English poet; while many more comparatively, from the time of Juvenal downward, fortunately for the world, have been willing to sacrifice the affections plighted to Themis on the altars of the Muse.

Brown's resolution at this crisis caused sincere regret to his friends, which they could not conceal, on seeing him thus suddenly turn from the path of honorable fame at the very moment when he was prepared to enter on it. His prospects, but lately so brilliant, seemed now overcast with a deep gloom. The embarrassments of his situation had also a most unfavorable effect on his own mind. Instead of the careful discipline to which it had been lately subjected, it was now left to rove at large wherever caprice should dictate, and waste itself on those romantic reveries and speculations to which he was naturally too much addicted. This was the period when the French Revolution was in its heat, and the awful convulsion experienced in one unhappy country seemed to be felt in every quarter of the globe; men grew familiar with the wildest paradoxes,

and the spirit of innovation menaced the oldest and best-established principles in morals and government. Brown's inquisitive and speculative mind partook of the prevailing scepticism. Some of his compositions, and especially one on the *Rights of Women*, published in 1797, show to what extravagance a benevolent mind may be led by fastening too exclusively on the contemplation of the evils of existing institutions and indulging in indefinite dreams of perfectibility.

There is no period of existence when the spirit of a man is more apt to be depressed than when he is about to quit the safe and quiet harbor in which he has rode in safety from childhood, and to launch on the dark and unknown ocean where so many a gallant bark has gone down before him. How much must this disquietude be increased in the case of one who, like Brown, has thrown away the very chart and compass by which he was prepared to guide himself through the doubtful perils of the voyage! How heavily the gloom of despondency fell on his spirits at this time is attested by various extracts from his private correspondence. "As for me," he says, in one of his letters, "I long ago discovered that Nature had not qualified me for an actor on this stage. The nature of my education only added to these disqualifications, and I experienced all those deviations from the centre which arise when all our lessons are taken from books, and the scholar makes his own character the comment. A happy destiny, indeed, brought me to the knowledge of two or three

minds which Nature had fashioned in the same mould with my own, but these are gone. And, O God! enable me to wait the moment when it is thy will that I should follow them." In another epistle he remarks, "I have not been deficient in the pursuit of that necessary branch of knowledge, the study of myself. I will not explain the result, for have I not already sufficiently endeavored to make my friends unhappy by communications which, though they might easily be injurious, could not be of any possible advantage? I really, dear W., regret that period when your pity was first excited in my favor. I sincerely lament that I ever gave you reason to imagine that I was not so happy as a gay indifference with regard to the present, stubborn forgetfulness with respect to the uneasy past, and excursions into lightsome futurity could make me; for what end, what useful purposes, were promoted by the discovery? It could not take away from the number of the unhappy, but only add to it, by making those who loved me participate in my uneasiness, which each participation, so far from tending to diminish, would in reality increase, by adding those regrets, of which I had been author in them, to my own original stock." It is painful to witness the struggles of a generous spirit endeavoring to suppress the anguish thus involuntarily escaping in the warmth of affectionate intercourse. This becomes still more striking in the contrast exhibited between the assumed cheerfulness of much of his correspondence at this period and the uniform melancholy tone of his

private journal, the genuine record of his emotions.

Fortunately, his taste, refined by intellectual culture, and the elevation and spotless purity of his moral principles, raised him above the temptations of sensual indulgence, in which minds of weaker mould might have sought a temporary relief. His soul was steeled against the grosser seductions of appetite. The only avenue through which his principles could in any way be assailed was the understanding; and it would appear, from some dark hints in his correspondence at this period, that the rash idea of relieving himself from the weight of earthly sorrows by some voluntary deed of violence had more than once flitted across his mind. It is pleasing to observe with what beautiful modesty and simplicity of character he refers his abstinence from coarser indulgences to his constitutional infirmities, and consequent disinclination to them, which, in truth, could be only imputed to the excellence of his heart and his understanding. In one of his letters he remarks "that the benevolence of Nature rendered him, in a manner, an exile from many of the temptations that infest the minds of ardent youth. Whatever his wishes might have been, his benevolent destiny had prevented him from running into the frivolities of youth." He ascribes to this cause his love of letters, and his predominant anxiety to excel in whatever was a glorious subject of competition. "Had he been furnished with the nerves and muscles of his comrades, it was very far from impossible that he might have relinquished intel-

lectual pleasures. Nature had benevolently rendered him incapable of encountering such severe trials."

Brown's principal resources for dissipating the melancholy which hung over him were his inextinguishable love of letters, and the society of a few friends, to whom congeniality of taste and temper had united him from early years. In addition to these resources, we may mention his fondness for pedestrian rambles, which sometimes were of several weeks' duration. In the course of these excursions, the circle of his acquaintance and friends was gradually enlarged. In the city of New York, in particular, he contracted an intimacy with several individuals of similar age and kindred mould with himself. Among these, his earliest associate was Dr. E. H. Smith, a young gentleman of great promise in the medical profession. Brown had become known to him during the residence of the latter as a student in Philadelphia. By him our hero was introduced to Mr. Dunlap, who has survived to commemorate the virtues of his friend in a biography already noticed, and to Mr. Johnson, the accomplished author of the New York Law Reports. The society of these friends had sufficient attractions to induce him to repeat his visit to New York, until at length, in the beginning of 1798, he may be said to have established his permanent residence there, passing much of his time under the same roof with them. His amiable manners and accomplishments soon recommended him to the notice of other eminent individuals. He became

a member of a literary society, called the *Friendly Club*, comprehending names which have since shed a distinguished lustre over the various walks of literature and science.

The spirits of Brown seemed to be exalted in this new atmosphere. His sensibilities found a grateful exercise in the sympathies of friendship, and the powers of his mind were called into action by collision with others of similar tone with his own. His memory was enriched with the stores of various reading, hitherto conducted at random, with no higher object than temporary amusement or the gratification of an indefinite curiosity. He now concentrated his attention on some determinate object, and proposed to give full scope to his various talents and acquisitions in the career of an author, as yet so little travelled in our own country.

His first publication was that before noticed, entitled "*Alcuin*, a dialogue on the Rights of Women." It exhibits the crude and fanciful speculations of a theorist who, in his dreams of optimism, charges exclusively on human institutions the imperfections necessarily incident to human nature. The work, with all its ingenuity, made little impression on the public: it found few purchasers, and made, it may be presumed, still fewer converts.

He soon after began a romance, which he never completed, from which his biographer has given copious extracts. It is conducted in the epistolary form, and, although exhibiting little of his subsequent power and passion, is recommended by a

graceful and easy manner of narration, more attractive than the more elaborate and artificial style of his latter novel.

This abortive attempt was succeeded, in 1798, by the publication of *Wieland*, the first of that remarkable series of fictions which flowed in such rapid succession from his pen in this and the three following years. In this romance, the author, deviating from the usual track of domestic or historic incident, proposed to delineate the powerful workings of passion displayed by a mind constitutionally excitable, under the control of some terrible and mysterious agency. The scene is laid in Pennsylvania. The action takes place in a family by the name of Wieland, the principal member of which had inherited a melancholy and somewhat superstitious constitution of mind, which his habitual reading and contemplation deepened into a calm but steady fanaticism. This temper is nourished still farther by the occurrence of certain inexplicable circumstances of ominous import. Strange voices are heard by different members of the family, sometimes warning them of danger, sometimes announcing events seeming beyond the reach of human knowledge. The still and solemn hours of night are disturbed by the unearthly summons. The other actors of the drama are thrown into strange perplexity, and an underplot of events is curiously entangled by the occurrence of unaccountable sights as well as sounds. By the heated fancy of Wieland they are referred to supernatural agency. A fearful destiny seems to preside over the scene, and to carry

the actors onward to some awful catastrophe. At length the hour arrives. A solemn, mysterious voice announces to Wieland that he is now called on to testify his submission to the divine will by the sacrifice of his earthly affections,—to surrender up the affectionate partner of his bosom, on whom he had reposed all his hopes of happiness in this life. He obeys the mandate of Heaven. The stormy conflict of passion into which his mind is thrown, as the fearful sacrifice he is about to make calls up all the tender remembrances of conjugal fidelity and love, is painted with frightful strength of coloring. Although it presents, on the whole, as pertinent an example as we could offer from any of Brown's writings of the peculiar power and vividness of his conceptions, the whole scene is too long for insertion here. We will mutilate it, however, by a brief extract, as an illustration of our author's manner, more satisfactory than any criticism can be. Wieland, after receiving the fatal mandate, is represented in an apartment alone with his wife. His courage, or, rather, his desperation, fails him, and he sends her, on some pretext, from the chamber. An interval, during which his insane passions have time to rally, ensues.

"She returned with a light; I led the way to the chamber; she looked round her; she lifted the curtain of the bed; she saw nothing. At length she fixed inquiring eyes upon me. The light now enabled her to discover in my visage what darkness had hitherto concealed. Her cares were now transferred from my sister to myself, and she

said, in a tremulous voice, 'Wieland! you are not well; what ails you? Can I do nothing for you?' That accents and looks so winning should disarm me of my resolution was to be expected. My thoughts were thrown anew into anarchy. I spread my hand before my eyes, that I might not see her, and answered only by groans. She took my other hand between hers, and, pressing it to her heart, spoke with that voice which had ever swayed my will and wafted away sorrow. 'My friend! my soul's friend! tell me thy cause of grief. Do I not merit to partake with thee in thy cares? Am I not thy wife?'

"This was too much. I broke from her embrace, and retired to a corner of the room. In this pause, courage was once more infused into me. I resolved to execute my duty. She followed me, and renewed her passionate entreaty to know the cause of my distress.

"I raised my head and regarded her with steadfast looks. I muttered something about death, and the injunctions of my duty. At these words she shrunk back, and looked at me with a new expression of anguish. After a pause, she clasped her hands and exclaimed,

"'O Wieland! Wieland! God grant that I am mistaken; but surely something is wrong. I see it; it is too plain; thou art undone—lost to me and to thyself.' At the same time she gazed on my features with intensest anxiety, in hope that different symptoms would take place. I replied with vehemence, 'Undone! No; my duty is known, and I thank my God that my cowardice

is now vanquished, and I have power to fulfil it. Catharine! I pity the weakness of nature; I pity thee, but must not spare. Thy life is claimed from my hands: thou must die!'

"Fear was now added to her grief. 'What mean you? Why talk you of death? Bethink yourself, Wieland; bethink yourself, and this fit will pass. O! why came I hither? Why did you drag me hither?'

"'I brought thee hither to fulfil a divine command. I am appointed thy destroyer, and destroy thee I must.' Saying this, I seized her wrists. She shrieked aloud, and endeavored to free herself from my grasp, but her efforts were vain.

"'Surely, surely, Wieland, thou dost not mean it. Am I not thy wife? and wouldst thou kill me? Thou wilt not; and yet—I see—thou art Wieland no longer! A fury, resistless and horrible, possesses thee: spare me—spare—help—help—'

"Till her breath was stopped she shrieked for help—for mercy. When she could speak no longer, her gestures, her looks, appealed to my compassion. My accursed hand was irresolute and tremulous. I meant thy death to be sudden, thy struggles to be brief. Alas! my heart was infirm, my resolves mutable. Thrice I slackened my grasp, and life kept its hold, though in the midst of pangs. Her eyeballs started from their sockets. Grimness and distortion took place of all that used to bewitch me into transport and subdue me into reverence.

"I was commissioned to kill thee, but not to

torment thee with the foresight of thy death; not to multiply thy fears and prolong thy agonies. Haggard, and pale, and lifeless, at length thou ceasedst to contend with thy destiny.

"This was a moment of triumph. Thus had I successfully subdued the stubbornness of human passions; the victim which had been demanded was given; the deed was done past recall.

"I lifted the corpse in my arms, and laid it on the bed. I gazed upon it with delight. Such was the elation of my thoughts that I even broke into laughter. I clapped my hands, and exclaimed, 'It is done! My sacred duty is fulfilled! To that I have sacrificed, O my God! thy last and best gift, my wife!'

"For a while I thus soared above frailty. I imagined I had set myself forever beyond the reach of selfishness, but my imaginations were false. This rapture quickly subsided. I looked again at my wife. My joyous ebullitions vanished, and I asked myself who it was whom I saw. Methought it could not be Catharine. It could not be the woman who had lodged for years in my heart; who had slept nightly in my bosom; who had borne in her womb, who had fostered at her breast, the beings who called me father; whom I had watched with delight, and cherished with a fondness ever new and perpetually growing: it could not be the same.

"Where was her bloom? These deadly and blood-suffused orbs but ill resemble the azure and ecstatic tenderness of her eyes. The lucid stream that meandered over that bosom, the glow of love

that was wont to sit upon that cheek, are much unlike these livid stains and this hideous deformity. Alas! these were the traces of agony: the gripe of the assassin had been here!

"I will not dwell upon my lapse into desperate and outrageous sorrow. The breath of Heaven that sustained me was withdrawn, and I sunk into *mere man.* I leaped from the floor; I dashed my head against the wall; I uttered screams of horror; I panted after torment and pain. Eternal fire and the bickerings of hell, compared with what I felt, were music and a bed of roses.

"I thank my God that this degeneracy was transient,—that he deigned once more to raise me aloft. I thought upon what I had done as a sacrifice to duty, and *was calm.* My wife was dead; but I reflected that, though this source of human consolation was closed, yet others were still open. If the transports of a husband were no more, the feelings of a father had still scope for exercise. When remembrance of their mother should excite too keen a pang, I would look upon them and *be comforted.*

"While I revolved these ideas, new warmth flowed in upon my heart. I was wrong. These feelings were the growth of selfishness. Of this I was not aware; and, to dispel the mist that obscured my perceptions, a new effulgence and a new mandate were necessary.

"From these thoughts I was recalled by a ray that was shot into the room. A voice spake like that which I had before heard, 'Thou hast done well; but all is not done—the sacrifice is incom-

plete—thy children must be offered—they must perish with their mother!'"

This, too, is accomplished by the same remorseless arm, although the author has judiciously refrained from attempting to prolong the note of feeling, struck with so powerful a hand, by the recital of the particulars. The wretched fanatic is brought to trial for the murder, but is acquitted on the ground of insanity. The illusion which has bewildered him at length breaks on his understanding in its whole truth. He cannot sustain the shock, and the tragic tale closes with the suicide of the victim of superstition and imposture. The key to the whole of this mysterious agency which controls the circumstances of the story is—ventriloquism! ventriloquism exerted for the very purpose by a human fiend, from no motives of revenge or hatred, but pure diabolical malice, or, as he would make us believe, and the author seems willing to endorse this absurd version of it, as a mere practical joke! The reader, who has been gorged with this feast of horrors, is tempted to throw away the book in disgust at finding himself the dupe of such paltry jugglery; which, whatever sense be given to the term ventriloquism, is altogether incompetent to the various phenomena of sight and sound with which the story is so plentifully seasoned. We can feel the force of Dryden's imprecation when he cursed the inventors of those fifth acts which are bound to unravel all the fine mesh of impossibilities which the author's wits had been so busy entangling in the four preceding.

The explication of the mysteries of Wieland naturally suggests the question how far an author is bound to explain the *supernaturalities*, if we may so call them, of his fictions, and whether it is not better, on the whole, to trust to the willing superstition and credulity of the reader (of which there is perhaps store enough in almost every bosom, at the present enlightened day even, for poetical purposes) than to attempt a solution on purely natural or mechanical principles. It was thought no harm for the ancients to bring the use of *machinery* into their epics, and a similar freedom was conceded to the old English dramatists, whose ghosts and witches were placed in the much more perilous predicament of being subjected to the scrutiny of the spectator, whose senses are not near so likely to be duped as the sensitive and excited imagination of the reader in his solitary chamber. It must be admitted, however, that the public of those days, when the

> "Undoubting mind
> Believed the magic wonders that were sung,"

were admirably seasoned for the action of superstition in all forms, and furnished, therefore, a most enviable audience for the melodramatic artist, whether dramatist or romance-writer. But all this is changed. No witches ride the air nowadays, and fairies no longer "dance their rounds by the pale moonlight," as the worthy Bishop Corbet, indeed, lamented a century and a half ago.

Still, it may be allowed, perhaps, if the scene is laid in some remote age or country, to borrow

the ancient superstitions of the place, and incorporate them into, or, at least, color the story with them, without shocking the well-bred prejudices of the modern reader. Sir Walter Scott has done this with good effect in more than one of his romances, as every one will readily call to mind. A fine example occurs in the Boden Glass apparition in Waverly, which the great novelist, far from attempting to explain on any philosophical principles, or even by an intimation of its being the mere creation of a feverish imagination, has left as he found it, trusting that the reader's poetic feeling will readily accommodate itself to the popular superstitions of the country he is depicting. This reserve on his part, indeed, arising from a truly poetic view of the subject and an honest reliance on a similar spirit in his reader, has laid him open, with some matter-of-fact people, to the imputation of not being wholly untouched himself by the national superstitions. Yet how much would the whole scene have lost in its permanent effect if the author had attempted an explanation of the apparition on the ground of an optical illusion not infrequent among the mountain-mists of the Highlands, or any other of the ingenious solutions so readily at the command of the thoroughbred story-teller!

It must be acknowledged, however, that this way of solving the riddles of romance would hardly be admissible in a story drawn from familiar scenes and situations in modern life, and especially in our own country. The lights of education are flung too bright and broad over the land

to allow any lurking-hole for the shadows of a twilight age. So much the worse for the poet and the novelist. Their province must now be confined to poor human nature, without meddling with the "Gorgons and chimeras dire" which floated through the bewildered brains of our forefathers, at least on the other side of the water. At any rate, if a writer, in this broad sunshine, ventures on any sort of *diablerie*, he is forced to explain it by all the thousand contrivances of trap-doors, secret passages, waxen images, and other make-shifts from the property-room of Mrs. Radcliffe and Company.

Brown, indeed, has resorted to a somewhat higher mode of elucidating his mysteries by a remarkable phenomenon of our nature. But the misfortune of all these attempts to account for the marvels of the story by natural or mechanical causes is, that they are very seldom satisfactory, or competent to their object. This is eminently the case with the ventriloquism in Wieland. Even where they are competent, it may be doubted whether the reader who has suffered his credulous fancy to be entranced by the spell of the magician will be gratified to learn, at the end, by what cheap mechanical contrivance he has been duped. However this may be, it is certain that a very unfavorable effect, in another respect, is produced on his mind, after he is made acquainted with the nature of the secret spring by which the machinery is played, more especially when one leading circumstance, like ventriloquism in Wieland, is made the master-key, as it were, by which all the mysteries

are to be unlocked and opened at once. With this explanation at hand, it is extremely difficult to rise to that sensation of mysterious awe and apprehension on which so much of the sublimity and general effect of the narrative necessarily depends. Instead of such feelings, the only ones which can enable us to do full justice to the author's conceptions, we sometimes, on the contrary, may detect a smile lurking in the corner of the mouth as we peruse scenes of positive power, from the contrast obviously suggested of the impotence of the apparatus and the portentous character of the results. The critic, therefore, possessed of the real key to the mysteries of the story, if he would do justice to his author's merits, must divest himself, as it were, of his previous knowledge, by fastening his attention on the results, to the exclusion of the insignificant means by which they are achieved. He will not always find this an easy matter.

But to return from this rambling digression. In the following year, 1799, Brown published his second novel, entitled *Ormond.* The story presents few of the deeply agitating scenes and powerful bursts of passion which distinguish the first. It is designed to exhibit a model of surpassing excellence in a female rising superior to all the shocks of adversity and the more perilous blandishments of seduction, and who, as the scene grows darker and darker around her, seems to illumine the whole with the radiance of her celestial virtues. The reader is reminded of the " patient Griselda," so delicately portrayed by the

pencils of Boccaccio and Chaucer. It must be admitted, however, that the contemplation of such a character in the abstract is more imposing than the minute details by which we attain to the knowledge of it; and although there is nothing, we are told, which the gods looked down upon with more satisfaction than a brave mind struggling with the storms of adversity, yet, when these come in the guise of poverty and all the train of teasing annoyances in domestic life, the tale, if long protracted, too often produces a sensation of weariness scarcely to be compensated by the moral grandeur of the spectacle.

The appearance of these two novels constitutes an epoch in the ornamental literature of America. They are the first decidedly successful attempts in the walk of romantic fiction. They are still farther remarkable as illustrating the character and state of society on this side of the Atlantic, instead of resorting to the exhausted springs of European invention. These circumstances, as well as the uncommon powers they displayed both of conception and execution, recommended them to the notice of the literary world, although their philosophical method of dissecting passion and analyzing motives of action placed them somewhat beyond the reach of vulgar popularity. Brown was sensible of the favorable impression which he had made, and mentions it in one of his epistles to his brother with his usual unaffected modesty: "I add somewhat, though not so much as I might if I were so inclined, to the number of my friends. I find to be the writer of *Wieland* and *Ormond*

is a greater recommendation than I ever imagined it would be."

In the course of the same year, the quiet tenor of his life was interrupted by the visitation of that fearful pestilence, the yellow fever, which had for several successive years made its appearance in the city of New York, but which in 1798 fell upon it with a violence similar to that with which it had desolated Philadelphia in 1793. Brown had taken the precaution of withdrawing from the latter city, where he then resided, on its first appearance there. He prolonged his stay in New York, however, relying on the healthiness of the quarter of the town where he lived, and the habitual abstemiousness of his diet. His friend Smith was necessarily detained there by the duties of his profession; and Brown, in answer to the reiterated importunities of his absent relatives to withdraw from the infected city, refused to do so, on the ground that his personal services might be required by the friends who remained in it,—a disinterestedness well meriting the strength of attachment which he excited in the bosom of his companions.

Unhappily, Brown was right in his prognostics, and his services were too soon required in behalf of his friend Dr. Smith, who fell a victim to his own benevolence, having caught the fatal malady from an Italian gentleman, a stranger in the city, whom he received, when infected with the disease, into his house, relinquishing to him his own apartment. Brown had the melancholy satisfaction of performing the last sad offices of affection to his

dying friend. He himself soon became affected with the same disorder; and it was not till after a severe illness that he so far recovered as to be able to transfer his residence to Perth Amboy, the abode of Mr. Dunlap, where a pure and invigorating atmosphere, aided by the kind attentions of his host, gradually restored him to a sufficient degree of health and spirits for the prosecution of his literary labors.

The spectacle he had witnessed made too deep an impression on him to be readily effaced, and he resolved to transfer his own conceptions of it, while yet fresh, to the page of fiction, or, as it might rather be called, of history, for the purpose, as he intimates in his preface, of imparting to others some of the fruits of the melancholy lesson he had himself experienced. Such was the origin of his next novel, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*. This was the fatal year of the yellow fever in Philadelphia. The action of the story is chiefly confined to that city, but seems to be prepared with little contrivance, on no regular or systematic plan, consisting simply of a succession of incidents, having little cohesion except in reference to the hero, but affording situations of great interest and frightful fidelity of coloring. The pestilence wasting a thriving and populous city has furnished a topic for more than one great master. It will be remembered as the terror of every school-boy in the pages of Thucydides; it forms the gloomy portal to the light and airy fictions of Boccaccio; and it has furnished a subject for the graphic pencil of the English novelist

De Foe, the only one of the three who never witnessed the horrors which he paints, but whose fictions wear an aspect of reality which history can rarely reach.

Brown has succeeded in giving the same terrible distinctness to his impressions by means of individual portraiture. He has, however, not confined himself to this, but, by a variety of touches, lays open to our view the whole interior of the city of the plague. Instead of expatiating on the loathsome symptoms and physical ravages of the disease, he selects the most striking moral circumstances which attend it; he dwells on the withering sensation that falls so heavily on the heart in the streets of the once busy and crowded city, now deserted and silent, save only where the wheels of the melancholy hearse are heard to rumble along the pavement. Our author not unfrequently succeeds in conveying more to the heart by the skilful selection of a single circumstance than would have flowed from a multitude of petty details. It is the art of the great masters of poetry and painting.

The same year in which Brown produced the first part of "Arthur Mervyn," he entered on the publication of a periodical entitled *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, a work that during its brief existence, which terminated in the following year, afforded abundant evidence of its editor's versatility of talent and the ample range of his literary acquisitions. Our hero was now fairly in the traces of authorship. He looked to it as his permanent vocation; and the indefati-

gable diligence with which he devoted himself to it may at least serve to show that he did not shrink from his professional engagements from any lack of industry or enterprise.

The publication of "Arthur Mervyn" was succeeded not long after by that of *Edgar Huntly; or, The Adventures of a Sleepwalker*, a romance presenting a greater variety of wild and picturesque adventure, with more copious delineations of natural scenery, than is to be found in his other fictions; circumstances, no doubt, possessing more attractions for the mass of readers than the peculiarities of his other novels. Indeed, the author has succeeded perfectly in constantly stimulating the curiosity by a succession of as original incidents, perils, and hairbreadth escapes as ever flitted across a poet's fancy. It is no small triumph of the art to be able to maintain the curiosity of the reader unflagging through a succession of incidents which, far from being sustained by one predominant passion and forming parts of one whole, rely each for its interest on its own independent merits.

The story is laid in the western part of Pennsylvania, where the author has diversified his descriptions of a simple and almost primitive state of society with uncommonly animated sketches of rural scenery. It is worth observing how the sombre complexion of Brown's imagination, which so deeply tinges his moral portraiture, sheds its gloom over his pictures of material nature, raising the landscape into all the severe and savage sublimity of a Salvator Rosa. The som-

nambulism of this novel, which, like the ventriloquism of "Wieland," is the moving principle of all the machinery, has this advantage over the latter, that it does not necessarily impair the effect by perpetually suggesting a solution of mysteries, and thus dispelling the illusion on whose existence the effect of the whole story mainly depends. The adventures, indeed, built upon it are not the most probable in the world; but, waiving this,—we shall be well rewarded for such concession,—there is no farther difficulty.

The extract already cited by us from the first of our author's novels has furnished the reader with an illustration of his power in displaying the conflict of passion under high moral excitement. We will now venture another quotation from the work before us, in order to exhibit more fully his talent for the description of external objects.

Edgar Huntly, the hero of the story, is represented in one of the wild mountain-fastnesses of Norwalk, a district in the western part of Pennsylvania. He is on the brink of a ravine, from which the only avenue lies over the body of a tree thrown across the chasm, through whose dark depths below a rushing torrent is heard to pour its waters.

"While occupied with these reflections, my eyes were fixed upon the opposite steeps. The tops of the trees, waving to and fro in the wildest commotion, and their trunks occasionally bending to the blast, which, in these lofty regions, blew with a violence unknown in the tracts below, exhibited an awful spectacle. At length my attention was

attracted by the trunk which lay across the gulf, and which I had converted into a bridge. I perceived that it had already swerved somewhat from its original position; that every blast broke or loosened some of the fibres by which its roots were connected with the opposite bank; and that, if the storm did not speedily abate, there was imminent danger of its being torn from the rock and precipitated into the chasm. Thus my retreat would be cut off, and the evils from which I was endeavoring to rescue another would be experienced by myself.

"I believed my destiny to hang upon the expedition with which I should recross this gulf. The moments that were spent in these deliberations were critical, and I shuddered to observe that the trunk was held in its place by one or two fibres, which were already stretched almost to breaking.

"To pass along the trunk, rendered slippery by the wet and unsteadfast by the wind, was eminently dangerous. To maintain my hold in passing, in defiance of the whirlwind, required the most vigorous exertions. For this end, it was necessary to discommode myself of my cloak, and of the volume which I carried in the pocket of my coat.

"Just as I had disposed of these encumbrances, and had risen from my seat, my attention was again called to the opposite steep by the most unwelcome object that at this time could possibly occur. Something was perceived moving among the bushes and rocks, which, for a time, I hoped was nothing more than a raccoon or opossum,

but which presently appeared to be a panther. His gray coat, extended claws, fiery eyes, and a cry which he at that moment uttered, and which, by its resemblance to the human voice, is peculiarly terrific, denoted him to be the most ferocious and untamable of that detested race. The industry of our hunters has nearly banished animals of prey from these precincts. The fastnesses of Norwalk, however, could not but afford refuge to some of them. Of late I had met them so rarely that my fears were seldom alive, and I trod without caution the ruggedest and most solitary haunts. Still, however, I had seldom been unfurnished in my rambles with the means of defence.

"The unfrequency with which I had lately encountered this foe, and the encumbrance of provision, made me neglect, on this occasion, to bring with me my usual arms. The beast that was now before me, when stimulated by hunger, was accustomed to assail whatever could provide him with a banquet of blood. He would set upon the man and the deer with equal and irresistible ferocity. His sagacity was equal to his strength, and he seemed able to discover when his antagonist was armed and prepared for defence.

"My past experience enabled me to estimate the full extent of my danger. He sat on the brow of the steep, eying the bridge, and apparently deliberating whether he should cross it. It was probable that he had scented my footsteps thus far, and, should he pass over, his vigilance could scarcely fail of detecting my asylum.

"Should he retain his present station, my dan-

ger was scarcely lessened. To pass over in the face of a famished tiger was only to rush upon my fate. The falling of the trunk, which had lately been so anxiously deprecated, was now with no less solicitude desired. Every new gust I hoped would tear asunder its remaining bands, and, by cutting off all communication between the opposite steeps, place me in security. My hopes, however, were destined to be frustrated. The fibres of the prostrate tree were obstinately tenacious of their hold, and presently the animal scrambled down the rock and proceeded to cross it.

"Of all kinds of death, that which now menaced me was the most abhorred. To die by disease, or by the hand of a fellow-creature, was propitious and lenient in comparison with being rent to pieces by the fangs of this savage. To perish in this obscure retreat by means so impervious to the anxious curiosity of my friends, to lose my portion of existence by so untoward and ignoble a destiny, was insupportable. I bitterly deplored my rashness in coming hither unprovided for an encounter like this.

"The evil of my present circumstances consisted chiefly in suspense. My death was unavoidable, but my imagination had leisure to torment itself by anticipations. One foot of the savage was slowly and cautiously moved after the other. He struck his claws so deeply into the bark that they were with difficulty withdrawn. At length he leaped upon the ground. We were now separated by an interval of scarcely eight feet. To leave the spot where I crouched was impossible.

Behind and beside me the cliff rose perpendicularly, and before me was this grim and terrible visage. I shrunk still closer to the ground, and closed my eyes.

"From this pause of horror I was aroused by the noise occasioned by a second spring of the animal. He leaped into the pit in which I had so deeply regretted that I had not taken refuge, and disappeared. My rescue was so sudden, and so much beyond my belief or my hope, that I doubted for a moment whether my senses did not deceive me. This opportunity of escape was not to be neglected. I left my place and scrambled over the trunk with a precipitation which had like to have proved fatal. The tree groaned and shook under me, the wind blew with unexampled violence, and I had scarcely reached the opposite steep when the roots were severed from the rock and the whole fell thundering to the bottom of the chasm.

"My trepidations were not speedily quieted. I looked back with wonder on my hairbreadth escape, and on that singular concurrence of events which had placed me in so short a period in absolute security. Had the trunk fallen a moment earlier, I should have been imprisoned on the hill or thrown headlong. Had its fall been delayed another moment, I should have been pursued; for the beast now issued from his den, and testified his surprise and disappointment by tokens the sight of which made my blood run cold.

"He saw me, and hastened to the verge of the chasm. He squatted on his hind legs, and as-

sumed the attitude of one preparing to leap. My consternation was excited afresh by these appearances. It seemed at first as if the rift was too wide for any power of muscles to carry him in safety over; but I knew the unparalleled agility of this animal, and that his experience had made him a better judge of the practicability of this exploit than I was.

" Still, there was hope that he would relinquish this design as desperate. This hope was quickly at an end. He sprung, and his fore legs touched the verge of the rock on which I stood. In spite of vehement exertions, however, the surface was too smooth and too hard to allow him to make good his hold. He fell, and a piercing cry uttered below showed that nothing had obstructed his descent to the bottom."

The subsequent narrative leads the hero through a variety of romantic adventures, especially with the savages, with whom he has several desperate rencounters and critical escapes. The track of adventure, indeed, strikes into the same wild solitudes of the forest that have since been so frequently travelled over by our ingenious countryman Cooper. The light in which the character of the North American Indian has been exhibited by the two writers has little resemblance. Brown's sketches, it is true, are few and faint. As far as they go, however, they are confined to such views as are most conformable to the popular conceptions, bringing into full relief the rude and uncouth lineaments of the Indian character, its cunning, cruelty, and unmitigated ferocity, with no

intimations of a more generous nature. Cooper, on the other hand, discards all the coarser elements of savage life, reserving those only of a picturesque and romantic cast, and elevating the souls of his warriors by such sentiments of courtesy, high-toned gallantry, and passionate tenderness as belong to the riper period of civilization. Thus idealized, the portrait, if not strictly that of the fierce and untamed son of the forest, is at least sufficiently true for poetical purposes. Cooper is indeed a poet. His descriptions of inanimate nature, no less than of savage man, are instinct with the breath of poetry. Witness his infinitely various pictures of the ocean, or, still more, of the beautiful spirit that rides upon its bosom, the gallant ship, which under his touches becomes an animated thing, inspired by a living soul; reminding us of the beautiful superstition of the simple-hearted natives, who fancied the bark of Columbus some celestial visitant, descending on his broad pinions from the skies.

Brown is far less of a colorist. He deals less in external nature, but searches the depths of the soul. He may be rather called a philosophical than a poetical writer; for, though he has that intensity of feeling which constitutes one of the distinguishing attributes of the latter, yet in his most tumultuous bursts of passion we frequently find him pausing to analyze and coolly speculate on the elements which have raised it. This intrusion, indeed, of reason, *la raison froide*, into scenes of the greatest interest and emotion, has sometimes the unhappy effect of chilling them altogether.

In 1800 Brown published the second part of his *Arthur Mervyn*, whose occasional displays of energy and pathos by no means compensate the violent dislocations and general improbabilities of the narrative. Our author was led into these defects by the unpardonable precipitancy of his composition. Three of his romances were thrown off in the course of one year. These were written with the printer's devil literally at his elbow, one being begun before another was completed, and all of them before a regular, well-digested plan was devised for their execution.

The consequences of this curious style of doing business are such as might have been predicted. The incidents are strung together with about as little connection as the rhymes in "The House that Jack built;" and the whole reminds us of some bizarre, antiquated edifice, exhibiting a dozen styles of architecture, according to the caprice or convenience of its successive owners.

The reader is ever at a loss for a clue to guide him through the labyrinth of strange, incongruous incident. It would seem as if the great object of the author was to keep alive the state of suspense, on the player's principle, in "The Rehearsal," that "on the stage it is best to keep the audience in suspense; for to guess presently at the plot or the sense tires them at the end of the first act. Now, here every line surprises you, and brings in new matter!" Perhaps, however, all this proceeds less from calculation than from the embarrassment which the novelist feels in attempting a solution of his own riddles, and which leads him to put off the

PORTRAIT OF VOLTAIRE.

reader, by multiplying incident after incident, until at length, entangled in the complicated snarl of his own intrigue, he is finally obliged, when the fatal hour arrives, to cut the knot which he cannot unravel. There is no other way by which we can account for the forced and violent *dénouements* which bring up so many of Brown's fictions. Voltaire has remarked, somewhere in his Commentaries on Corneille, that "an author may write with the rapidity of genius, but should correct with scrupulous deliberation." Our author seems to have thought it sufficient to comply with the first half of the maxim.

In 1801 Brown published his novel of *Clara Howard*, and in 1804 closed the series with *Jane Talbot*, first printed in England. They are composed in a more subdued tone, discarding those startling preternatural incidents of which he had made such free use in his former fictions. In the preface to his first romance, "Wieland," he remarks, in allusion to the mystery on which the story is made to depend, that "it is a sufficient vindication of the writer if history furnishes one parallel fact." But the French critic, who tells us *le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable*, has, with more judgment, condemned this vicious recurrence to extravagant and improbable incident. Truth cannot always be pleaded in vindication of the author of a fiction any more than of a libel. Brown seems to have subsequently come into the same opinion; for, in a letter addressed to his brother James, after the publication of "Edgar Huntly," he observes, "Your remarks

upon the gloominess and out-of-nature incidents of 'Huntly,' if they be not just in their full extent, are doubtless such as most readers will make, which alone is sufficient reason for dropping the doleful tone and assuming a cheerful one, or, at least, substituting moral causes and daily incidents in place of the prodigious or the singular. I shall not fall hereafter into that strain." The two last novels of our author, however, although purified from the more glaring defects of the preceding, were so inferior in their general power and originality of conception that they never rose to the same level in public favor.

In the year 1801 Brown returned to his native city, Philadelphia, where he established his residence in the family of his brother. Here he continued, steadily pursuing his literary avocations, and in 1803 undertook the conduct of a periodical, entitled *The Literary Magazine and American Register*. A great change had taken place in his opinions on more than one important topic connected with human life and happiness, and, indeed, in his general tone of thinking, since abandoning his professional career. Brighter prospects, no doubt, suggested to him more cheerful considerations. Instead of a mere dreamer in the world of fancy, he had now become a practical man: larger experience and deeper meditation had shown him the emptiness of his Utopian theories; and, though his sensibilities were as ardent and as easily enlisted as ever in the cause of humanity, his schemes of amelioration were built upon, not against, the existing institutions of society. The enunciation of

the principles on which the periodical above alluded to was to be conducted is so honorable every way to his heart and his understanding that we cannot refrain from making a brief extract from it:

"In an age like this, when the foundations of religion and morality have been so boldly attacked, it seems necessary, in announcing a work of this nature, to be particularly explicit as to the path which the editor means to pursue. He therefore avows himself to be, without equivocation or reserve, the ardent friend and the willing champion of the Christian religion. Christian piety he reveres as the highest excellence of human beings; and the amplest reward he can seek for his labor is the consciousness of having in some degree, however inconsiderable, contributed to recommend the practice of religious duties. As in the conduct of this work a supreme regard will be paid to the interests of religion and morality, he will scrupulously guard against all that dishonors and impairs that principle. Everything that savors of indelicacy or licentiousness will be rigorously proscribed. His poetical pieces may be dull, but they shall at least be free from voluptuousness or sensuality; and his prose, whether seconded or not by genius and knowledge, shall scrupulously aim at the promotion of public and private virtue."

During his abode in New York our author had formed an attachment to an amiable and accomplished young lady, Miss Elizabeth Linn, daughter of the excellent and highly-gifted Presbyterian divine, Dr. William Linn, of that city. Their

mutual attachment, in which the impulses of the heart were sanctioned by the understanding, was followed by their marriage in November, 1804, after which he never again removed his residence from Philadelphia.

With the additional responsibilities of his new station, he pursued his literary labors with increased diligence. He projected the plan of an *Annual Register*, the first work of the kind in the country, and in 1806 edited the first volume of the publication, which was undertaken at the risk of an eminent bookseller of Philadelphia, Mr. Conrad, who had engaged his editorial labors in the conduct of the former Magazine, begun in 1803. When it is considered that both these periodicals were placed under the superintendence of one individual, and that he bestowed such indefatigable attention on them that they were not only prepared, but a large portion actually executed, by his own hands, we shall form no mean opinion of the extent and variety of his stores of information and his facility in applying them. Both works are replete with evidences of the taste and erudition of their editor, embracing a wide range of miscellaneous articles, essays, literary criticism, and scientific researches. The historical portion of " The Register " in particular, comprehending, in addition to the political annals of the principal states of Europe and of our own country, an elaborate inquiry into the origin and organization of our domestic institutions, displays a discrimination in the selection of incidents, and a good faith and candor in the mode of discussing

them, that entitle it to great authority as a record of contemporary transactions. Eight volumes were published of the first-mentioned periodical, and the latter was continued under his direction till the end of the fifth volume, 1809.

In addition to these regular and, as they may be called, professional labors, he indulged his prolific pen in various speculations, both of a literary and political character, many of which appeared in the pages of the "Portfolio." Among other occasional productions, we may notice a beautiful biographical sketch of his wife's brother, Dr. J. B. Linn, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, whose lamented death occurred in the year succeeding Brown's marriage. We must not leave out of the account three elaborate and extended pamphlets, published between 1803 and 1809, on political topics of deep interest to the community at that time. The first of these, on the cession of Louisiana to the French, soon went into a second edition. They all excited general attention at the time of their appearance by the novelty of their arguments, the variety and copiousness of their information, the liberality of their views, the independence, so rare at that day, of foreign prejudices, the exemption, still rarer, from the bitterness of party spirit, and, lastly, the tone of loyal and heartfelt patriotism—a patriotism without cant—with which the author dwells on the expanding glory and prosperity of his country in a strain of prophecy that it is our boast has now become history.

Thus occupied, Brown's situation seemed now

to afford him all the means for happiness attainable in this life. His own labors secured to him an honorable independence and a high reputation, which, to a mind devoted to professional or other intellectual pursuits, is usually of far higher estimation than gain. Round his own fireside he found ample scope for the exercise of his affectionate sensibilities, while the tranquil pleasures of domestic life proved the best possible relaxation for a mind wearied by severe intellectual effort. His grateful heart was deeply sensible to the extent of his blessings; and in more than one letter he indulges in a vein of reflection which shows that his only solicitude was from the fear of their instability. His own health furnished too well-grounded cause for such apprehensions.

We have already noticed that he set out in life with a feeble constitution. His sedentary habits and intense application had not, as it may well be believed, contributed to repair the defects of Nature. He had for some time shown a disposition to pulmonary complaints, and had raised blood more than once, which he in vain endeavored to persuade himself did not proceed from the lungs. As the real character of the disease disclosed itself in a manner not to be mistaken, his anxious friends would have persuaded him to cross the water in the hope of re-establishing his health by a seasonable change of climate. But Brown could not endure the thoughts of so long a separation from his beloved family, and he trusted to the effect of a temporary abstinence

from business, and of one of those excursions into the country by which he had so often recruited his health and spirits.

In the summer of 1809 he made a tour into New Jersey and New York. A letter addressed to one of his family from the banks of the Hudson, during this journey, exhibits in melancholy colors how large a portion of his life had been clouded by disease, which now, indeed, was too oppressive to admit of any other alleviation than what he could find in the bosom of his own family.

"My dearest Mary,—Instead of wandering about and viewing more nearly a place that affords very pleasing landscapes, here am I, hovering over the images of wife, children, and sisters. I want to write to you and home; and, though unable to procure paper enough to form a letter, I cannot help saying something even on this scrap.

"I am mortified to think how incurious and inactive a mind has fallen to my lot. I left home with reluctance. If I had not brought a beloved part of my home along with me, I should probably have not left it at all. At a distance from home, my enjoyments, my affections, are beside you. If swayed by mere inclination, I should not be out of your company a quarter of an hour between my parting and returning hour; but I have some mercy on you and Susan, and a due conviction of my want of power to beguile your vacant hour with amusement or improve it by instruction. Even if I were ever so well, and if

my spirits did not continually hover on the brink of dejection, my talk could only make you yawn; as things are, my company can only tend to create a gap indeed.

"When have I known that lightness and vivacity of mind which the divine flow of health, even in calamity, produces in some men, and would produce in me, no doubt,—at least, when not soured by misfortune? Never; scarcely ever; not longer than half an hour at a time since I have called myself man, and not a moment since I left you."

Finding these brief excursions productive of no salutary change in his health, he at length complied with the entreaties of his friends, and determined to try the effect of a voyage to Europe in the following spring. That spring he was doomed never to behold. About the middle of November he was taken with a violent pain in his left side, for which he was bled. From that time forward he was confined to his chamber. His malady was not attended with the exemption from actual pain with which Nature seems sometimes willing to compensate the sufferer for the length of its duration. His sufferings were incessant and acute; and they were supported not only without a murmur, but with an appearance of cheerfulness to which the hearts of his friends could but ill respond. He met the approach of death in the true spirit of Christian philosophy. No other dread but that of separation from those dear to him on earth had power to disturb his tran-

quillity for a moment. But the temper of his mind in his last hours is best disclosed in a communication from that faithful partner who contributed more than any other to support him through them. "He always felt for others more than for himself; and the evidences of sorrow in those around him, which could not at all times be suppressed, appeared to affect him more than his own sufferings. Whenever he spoke of the probability of a fatal termination to his disease, it was in an indirect and covert manner, as, 'you must do so and so when I am absent,' or 'when I am asleep.' He surrendered not up one faculty of his soul but with his last breath. He saw death in every step of his approach, and viewed him as a messenger that brought with him no terrors. He frequently expressed his resignation; but his resignation was not produced by apathy or pain; for, while he bowed with submission to the Divine will, he felt with the keenest sensibility his separation from those who made this world but too dear to him. Towards the last he spoke of death without disguise, and appeared to wish to prepare his friends for the event which he felt to be approaching. A few days previous to his change, as sitting up in the bed, he fixed his eyes on the sky, and desired not to be spoken to until he first spoke. In this position, and with a serene countenance, he continued for some minutes, and then said to his wife, 'When I desired you not to speak to me, I had the most transporting and sublime feelings I have ever experienced; I wanted to enjoy them, and know how long they would last;' con-

cluding with requesting her to remember the circumstance."

A visible change took place in him on the morning of the 19th of February, 1810, and he caused his family to be assembled around his bed, when he took leave of each one of them in the most tender and impressive manner. He lingered, however, a few days longer, remaining in the full possession of his faculties to the 22d of the month, when he expired without a struggle. He had reached the thirty-ninth year of his age the month preceding his death. The family which he left consisted of a wife and four children.

There was nothing striking in Brown's personal appearance. His manners, however, were distinguished by a gentleness and unaffected simplicity which rendered them extremely agreeable. He possessed colloquial powers which do not always fall to the lot of the practised and ready writer. His rich and various acquisitions supplied an unfailing fund for the edification of his hearers. They did not lead him, however, to affect an air of superiority, or to assume too prominent a part in the dialogue, especially in large or mixed company, where he was rather disposed to be silent, reserving the display of his powers for the unrestrained intercourse of friendship. He was a stranger not only to base and malignant passions, but to the paltry jealousies which sometimes sour the intercourse of men of letters. On the contrary, he was ever prompt to do ample justice to the merits of others. His heart was warm with the feeling of universal benevolence.

Too sanguine and romantic views had exposed him to some miscalculations and consequent disappointments in youth, from which, however, he was subsequently retrieved by the strength of his understanding, which, combining with what may be called his natural elevation of soul, enabled him to settle the soundest principles for the regulation of his opinions and conduct in after-life. His reading was careless and desultory, but his appetite was voracious; and the great amount of miscellaneous information which he thus amassed was all demanded to supply the outpourings of his mind in a thousand channels of entertainment and instruction. His unwearied application is attested by the large amount of his works, large even for the present day, when mind seems to have caught the accelerated movement so generally given to the operations of machinery. The whole number of Brown's printed works, comprehending his editorial as well as original productions, to the former of which his own pen contributed a very disproportionate share, is not less than four-and-twenty printed volumes, not to mention various pamphlets, anonymous contributions to divers periodicals, as well as more than one compilation of laborious research which he left unfinished at his death.

Of this vast amount of matter, produced within the brief compass of little more than ten years, that portion on which his fame as an author must permanently rest is his novels. We have already entered too minutely into the merits of these productions to require anything farther than a few

general observations. They may probably claim to be regarded as having first opened the way to the successful cultivation of romantic fiction in this country. Great doubts were long entertained of our capabilities for immediate success in this department. We had none of the buoyant, stirring associations of a romantic age; none of the chivalrous pageantry, the feudal and border story, or Robin Hood adventure; none of the dim, shadowy superstitions, and the traditional legends, which had gathered like moss round every stone, hill, and valley of the olden countries. Everything here wore a spick-and-span new aspect, and lay in the broad, garish sunshine of every-day life. We had none of the picturesque varieties of situation or costume; everything lay on the same dull, prosaic level: in short, we had none of the most obvious elements of poetry: at least so it appeared to the vulgar eye. It required the eye of genius to detect the rich stores of romantic and poetic interest that lay beneath the crust of society. Brown was aware of the capabilities of our country, and the poverty of the results he was less inclined to impute to the soil than to the cultivation of it: at least this would appear from some remarks dropped in his correspondence in 1794, several years before he broke ground in this field himself. "It used to be a favorite maxim with me, that the genius of a poet should be sacred to the glory of his country. How far this rule can be reduced to practice by an American bard, how far he can prudently observe it, and what success has crowned the efforts of those who, in their com-

positions, have shown that they have not been unmindful of it, is perhaps not worth the inquiry.

"Does it not appear to you that to give poetry a popular currency and universal reputation a particular cast of manners and state of civilization is necessary? I have sometimes thought so; but perhaps it is an error, and the want of popular poems argues only the demerit of those who have already written, or some defect in their works, which unfits them for every taste or understanding."

The success of our author's experiment, which was entirely devoted to American subjects, fully established the soundness of his opinions, which have been abundantly confirmed by the prolific pens of Irving, Cooper, Sedgwick, and other accomplished writers, who in their diversified sketches of national character and scenery have shown the full capacity of our country for all the purposes of fiction. Brown does not direct himself, like them, to the illustration of social life and character. He is little occupied with the exterior forms of society. He works in the depths of the heart, dwelling less on human action than the sources of it. He has been said to have formed himself on Godwin. Indeed, he openly avowed his admiration of that eminent writer, and has certainly in some respects adopted his mode of operation, studying character with a philosophic rather than a poetic eye. But there is no servile imitation in all this. He has borrowed the same torch, indeed, to read the page of human nature, but the lesson he derives from it is totally different. His

great object seems to be to exhibit the soul in scenes of extraordinary interest. For this purpose, striking and perilous situations are devised, or circumstances of strong moral excitement, a troubled conscience, partial gleams of insanity, or bodings of imaginary evil, which haunt the soul and force it into all the agonies of terror. In the midst of the fearful strife, we are coolly invited to investigate its causes and all the various phenomena which attend it; every contingency, probability, nay, possibility, however remote, is discussed and nicely balanced. The heat of the reader is seen to evaporate in this cold-blooded dissection, in which our author seems to rival Butler's hero, who,

> " Profoundly skilled in analytic,
> Could distinguish and divide
> A hair 'twixt south and southwest side."

We are constantly struck with the strange contrast of over-passion and over-reasoning. But perhaps, after all, these defects could not be pruned away from Brown's composition without detriment to his peculiar excellences. *Si non errâsset, fecerat ille minus.* If so, we may willingly pardon the one for the sake of the other.

We cannot close without adverting to our author's style. He bestowed great pains on the formation of it, but, in our opinion, without great success, at least in his novels. It has an elaborate, factitious air, contrasting singularly with the general simplicity of his taste and the careless rapidity of his composition. We are aware, indeed, that

works of imagination may bear a higher flush of color, a poetical varnish, in short, that must be refused to graver and more studied narrative. No writer has been so felicitous in reaching the exact point of good taste in this particular as Scott, who on a groundwork of prose may be said to have enabled his readers to breathe an atmosphere of poetry. More than one author, on the other hand, as Florian, in French, for example, and Lady Morgan, in English, in their attempts to reach this middle region, are eternally fluttering on the wing of sentiment, equally removed from good prose and good poetry.

Brown, perhaps willing to avoid this extreme, has fallen into the opposite one, forcing his style into unnatural vigor and condensation. Unusual and pedantic epithets, and elliptical forms of expression, in perpetual violation of idiom, are resorted to at the expense of simplicity and nature. He seems averse to telling simple things in a simple way. Thus, for example, we have such expressions as these: "I was *fraught with the persuasion that* my life was endangered." "The outer door was ajar. I shut it with trembling eagerness, and drew every bolt that *appended* to it." "His brain seemed to swell beyond its *continent*." "I waited till their slow and hoarser *inspirations* showed them to be both asleep. Just then, on changing my position, my head struck against some things which *depended* from the ceiling of the closet." "It was still dark, but my sleep was at an end, and, by a common apparatus (tinder-box?) that lay beside my bed, I could in-

stantly produce a light." "On recovering from *deliquium*, you found it where it had been dropped." It is unnecessary to multiply examples which we should not have adverted to at all had not our opinions in this matter been at variance with those of more than one respectable critic. This sort of language is no doubt in very bad taste. It cannot be denied, however, that although these defects are sufficiently general to give a coloring to the whole of his composition, yet his works afford many passages of undeniable eloquence and rhetorical beauty. It must be remembered, too, that his novels were his first productions, thrown off with careless profusion, and exhibiting many of the defects of an immature mind, which longer experience and practice might have corrected. Indeed, his later writings are recommended by a more correct and natural phraseology, although it must be allowed that the graver topics to which they are devoted, if they did not authorize, would at least render less conspicuous any studied formality and artifice of expression.

These verbal blemishes, combined with defects already alluded to in the development of his plots, but which all relate to the form rather than the *fond* of his subject, have made our author less extensively popular than his extraordinary powers would have entitled him to be. His peculiar merits, indeed, appeal to a higher order of criticism than is to be found in ordinary and superficial readers. Like the productions of Coleridge or Wordsworth, they seem to rely on deeper sen-

sibilities than most men possess, and tax the reasoning powers more severely than is agreeable to readers who resort to works of fiction only as an epicurean indulgence. The number of their admirers is therefore necessarily more limited than that of writers of less talent, who have shown more tact in accommodating themselves to the tone of popular feeling or prejudice.

But we are unwilling to part, with anything like a tone of disparagement lingering on our lips, with the amiable author to whom our rising literature is under such large and various obligations; who first opened a view into the boundless fields of fiction which subsequent adventurers have successfully explored; who has furnished so much for our instruction in the several departments of history and criticism, and has rendered still more effectual service by kindling in the bosom of the youthful scholar the same generous love of letters which glowed in his own; whose writings, in fine, have uniformly inculcated the pure and elevated morality exemplified in his life. The only thing we can regret is that a life so useful should have been so short, if, indeed, that can be considered short which has done so much towards attaining life's great end.

ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND*

(July, 1830)

THERE is nothing in which the moderns surpass the ancients more conspicuously than in their noble provisions for the relief of indigence and distress. The public policy of the ancients seems to have embraced only whatever might promote the aggrandizement or the direct prosperity of the state, and to have cared little for those unfortunate beings who, from disease or incapacity of any kind, were disqualified from contributing to this. But the beneficent influence of Christianity, combined with the general tendency of our social institutions, has led to the recognition of rights in the individual as sacred as those of the community, and has suggested manifold provisions for personal comfort and happiness.

The spirit of benevolence, thus widely, and oftentimes judiciously, exerted, continued until a very recent period, however, strangely insensible to the claims of a large class of objects to whom nature, and no misconduct or imprudence of their own, as is too often the case with the subjects of public charity, had denied some of the most estimable faculties of man. No suitable institutions, until the close of the last century, have been provided for the nurture of the deaf and dumb, or

* An Act to Incorporate the New England Asylum for the Blind. Approved March 2d, 1829.

the blind. Immured within hospitals and almshouses, like so many lunatics and incurables, they have been delivered over, if they escaped the physical, to all the moral contagion too frequently incident to such abodes, and have thus been involved in a mental darkness far more deplorable than their bodily one.

This injudicious treatment has resulted from the erroneous principle of viewing these unfortunate beings as an absolute burden on the public, utterly incapable of contributing to their own subsistence or of ministering in any degree to their own intellectual wants. Instead, however, of being degraded by such unworthy views, they should have been regarded as, what in truth they are, possessed of corporeal and mental capacities perfectly competent, under proper management, to the production of the most useful results. If wisdom from one entrance was quite shut out, other avenues for its admission still remained to be opened.

In order to give effective aid to persons in this predicament, it is necessary to place ourselves as far as possible in their peculiar situation, to consider to what faculties this insulated condition is, on the whole, most favorable, and in what direction they can be exercised with the best chance of success. Without such foresight, all our endeavors to aid them will only put them upon efforts above their strength, and result in serious mortification.

The blind, from the cheerful ways of men cut off, are necessarily excluded from the busy theatre

of human action. Their infirmity, however, which consigns them to darkness, and often to solitude, would seem favorable to contemplative habits and to the pursuits of abstract science and pure speculation. Undisturbed by external objects, the mind necessarily turns within, and concentrates its ideas on any point of investigation with greater intensity and perseverance. It is no uncommon thing, therefore, to find persons setting apart the silent hours of the evening for the purpose of composition or other purely intellectual exercise. Malebranche, when he wished to think intensely, used to close his shutters in the daytime, excluding every ray of light; and hence Democritus is said to have put out his eyes in order that he might philosophize the better,—a story the veracity of which Cicero, who relates it, is prudent enough not to vouch for.

Blindness must also be exceedingly favorable to the discipline of the memory. Whoever has had the misfortune, from any derangement of the organ, to be compelled to derive his knowledge of books less from the eye than the ear, will feel the truth of this. The difficulty of recalling what has once escaped, of reverting to or dwelling on the passages read aloud by another, compels the hearer to give undivided attention to the subject, and to impress it more forcibly on his own mind by subsequent and methodical reflection. Instances of the cultivation of this faculty to an extraordinary extent have been witnessed among the blind, and it has been most advantageously applied to the pursuit of abstract science, especially mathematics.

One of the most eminent illustrations of these remarks is the well-known history of Saunderson, who, though deprived in his infancy not only of sight, but of the organ itself, contrived to become so well acquainted with the Greek tongue as to read the works of the ancient mathematicians in the original. He made such advances in the higher departments of the science that he was appointed, "though not matriculated at the University," to fill the chair which a short time previous had been occupied by Sir Isaac Newton at Cambridge. The lectures of this blind professor on the most abstruse points of the Newtonian philosophy, and especially on optics, naturally filled his audience with admiration; and the perspicuity with which he communicated his ideas is said to have been unequalled. He was enabled, by the force of his memory, to perform many long operations in arithmetic, and to carry in his mind the most complex geometrical figures. As, however, it became necessary to supply the want of vision by some symbols which might be sensible to the touch, he contrived a table in which pins, whose value was determined principally by their relative position to each other, served him instead of figures, while for his diagrams he employed pegs, inserted at the requisite angles to each other, representing the lines by threads drawn around them. He was so expert in the use of these materials that when performing his calculations he would change the position of the pins with nearly the same facility that another person would indite figures, and when disturbed in an operation would afterwards

resume it again, ascertaining the posture in which he had left it by passing his hand carefully over the table. To such shifts and inventions does human ingenuity resort when stimulated by the thirst of knowledge; as the plant, when thrown into shade on one side, sends forth its branches eagerly in that direction where the light is permitted to fall upon it.

In like manner, the celebrated mathematician Euler continued, for many years after he became blind to indite and publish the results of his scientific labors, and at the time of his decease left nearly a hundred memoirs ready for the press, most of which have since been given to the world. An example of diligence equally indefatigable, though turned in a different channel, occurs in our contemporary Huber, who has contributed one of the most delightful volumes within the compass of natural history, and who, if he employed the eyes of another, guided them in their investigation to the right results by the light of his own mind.

Blindness would seem to be propitious, also, to the exercise of the inventive powers. Hence poetry, from the time of Thamyris and the blind Mæonides down to the Welsh harper and the ballad-grinder of our day, has been assigned as the peculiar province of those bereft of vision,

> "As the wakeful bird
> Sings darkling, and, in shadiest cover hid,
> Tunes her nocturnal note."

The greatest epic poem of antiquity was probably, as that of the moderns was certainly, composed in

darkness. It is easy to understand how the man who has once seen can recall and body forth in his conceptions new combinations of material beauty; but it would seem scarcely possible that one born blind, excluded from all acquaintance with "colored nature," as Condillac finely styles it, should excel in descriptive poetry. Yet there are eminent examples of this; among others, that of Blacklock, whose verses abound in the most agreeable and picturesque images. Yet he could have formed no other idea of colors than was conveyed by their moral associations, the source, indeed, of most of the pleasures we derive from descriptive poetry. It was thus that he studied the variegated aspect of nature, and read in it the successive revolutions of the seasons, their freshness, their prime, and decay.

Mons. Guillié, in an interesting essay on the instruction of the blind, to which we shall have occasion repeatedly to refer, quotes an example of the association of ideas in regard to colors, which occurred in one of his own pupils, who, in reciting the well-known passage in Horace, "*rubente dexterâ sacras jaculatus arces*," translated the first two words by "fiery" or "burning right hand." On being requested to render it literally, he called it "red right hand," and gave as the reason for his former version that he could form no positive conception of a red color; but that, as fire was said to be red, he connected the idea of heat with this color, and had therefore interpreted the wrath of Jupiter, demolishing town and tower, by the epithet "fiery or burning;" for "when people are angry,"

he added, "they are hot, and when they are hot, they must of course be red." He certainly seems to have formed a much more accurate notion of red than Locke's blind man.

But while a gift for poetry belongs only to the inspired few, and while many have neither taste nor talent for mathematical or speculative science, it is a consolation to reflect that the humblest individual who is destitute of sight may so far supply this deficiency by the perfection of the other senses as by their aid to attain a considerable degree of intellectual culture, as well as a familiarity with some of the most useful mechanic arts. It will be easier to conceive to what extent the perceptions of touch and hearing may be refined if we reflect how far that of sight is sharpened by exclusive reliance on it in certain situations. Thus the mariner descries objects at night, and at a distance upon the ocean, altogether imperceptible to the unpractised eye of a landsman. And the North American Indian steers his course undeviatingly through the trackless wilderness, guided only by such signs as escape the eye of the most inquisitive white man.

In like manner, the senses of hearing and feeling are capable of attaining such a degree of perfection in a blind person that by them alone he can distinguish his various acquaintances, and even the presence of persons whom he has but rarely met before, the size of the apartment, and the general locality of the spots in which he may happen to be, and guide himself safely across the most solitary districts and amid the throng of towns. Dr. Bew,

in a paper in the Manchester Collection of Memoirs, gives an account of a blind man of his acquaintance in Derbyshire, who was much used as a guide for travellers in the night over certain intricate roads, and particularly when the tracks were covered with snow. This same man was afterwards employed as a projector and surveyor of roads in that county. We well remember a blind man in the neighboring town of Salem, who officiated some twenty years since as the town crier, when that functionary performed many of the advertising duties now usurped by the newspaper, making his diurnal round, and stopping with great precision at every corner, trivium or quadrivium, to "chime his melodious twang." Yet this feat, the familiarity of which prevented it from occasioning any surprise, could have resulted only from the nicest observation of the undulations of the ground, or by an attention to the currents of air, or the different sound of the voice or other noises in these openings, signs altogether lost upon the man of eyes.

Mons. Guillié mentions several apparently well-attested anecdotes of blind persons who had the power of discriminating colors by the touch. One of the individuals noticed by him, a Dutchman, was so expert in this way that he was sure to come off conqueror at the card-table by the knowledge which he thus obtained of his adversary's hand whenever it came to his turn to deal. This power of discrimination of colors, which seems to be a gift only of a very few of the finer-fingered gentry, must be founded on the different consistency

or smoothness of the ingredients used in the various dyes. A more certain method of ascertaining these colors, that of tasting or touching them with the tongue, is frequently resorted to by the blind, who by this means often distinguish between those analogous colors, as black and dark blue, red and pink, which, having the greatest apparent affinity, not unfrequently deceive the eye.

Diderot, in an ingenious letter on the blind, *à l'usage de ceux qui voient*, has given a circumstantial narration of his visit to a blind man at Puisseaux, the son of a professor in the University of Paris, and well known in his day from the various accomplishments and manual dexterity which he exhibited, remarkable in a person in his situation. Being asked what notion he had formed of an eye, he replied, " I conceive it to be an organ on which the air produces the same effect as this staff on my hand. If, when you are looking at an object, I should interpose anything between your eyes and that object, it would prevent you from seeing it. And I am in the same predicament when I seek one thing with my staff and come across another." An explanation, says Diderot, as lucid as any which could be given by Descartes, who, it is singular, attempts, in his Dioptrics, to explain the analogy between the senses of feeling and seeing by figures of men blindfolded, groping their way with staffs in their hands. This same intelligent personage became so familiar with the properties of touch that he seems to have accounted them almost equally valuable with those of vision. On being interrogated if he felt a great

desire to have eyes, he answered, "Were it not for the mere gratification of curiosity, I think I should do as well to wish for long arms. It seems to me that my hands would inform me better of what is going on in the moon than your eyes and telescopes; and then the eyes lose the power of vision more readily than the hands that of feeling. It would be better to perfect the organ which I have than to bestow on me that which I have not."

Indeed, the "geometric sense" of touch, as Buffon terms it, as far as it reaches, is more faithful, and conveys oftentimes a more satisfactory idea of external forms, than the eye itself. The great defect is that its range is necessarily so limited. It is told of Saunderson that on one occasion he detected by his finger a counterfeit coin which had deceived the eye of a connoisseur. We are hardly aware how much of our dexterity in the use of the eye arises from incessant practice. Those who have been relieved from blindness at an advanced, or even early, period of life, have been found frequently to recur to the old and more familiar sense of touch, in preference to the sight. The celebrated English anatomist Cheselden mentions several illustrations of this fact in an account given by him of a blind boy whom he had successfully couched for cataracts at the age of fourteen. It was long before the youth could discriminate by his eye between his old companions the family cat and dog, dissimilar as such animals appear to us in color and conformation. Being ashamed to ask the oft-repeated question, he was observed one day to pass his hand carefully over the cat, and

then, looking at her steadfastly, to exclaim, " So, puss, I shall know you another time." It is more natural that he should have been deceived by the illusory art of painting, and it was long before he could comprehend that the objects depicted did not possess the same relief on the canvas as in nature. He inquired, " Which is the lying sense here, the sight or the touch? "

The faculty of hearing would seem susceptible of a similar refinement with that of seeing. To prove this without going into farther detail, it is only necessary to observe that much the larger proportion of blind persons are, more or less, proficients in music, and that in some of the institutions for their education, as that in Paris, for instance, *all* the pupils are instructed in this delightful art. The gift of a natural ear for melody, therefore, deemed comparatively rare with the *clairvoyans*, would seem to exist so far in every individual as to be capable, by a suitable cultivation, of affording a high degree of relish, at least to himself.

As, in order to a successful education of the blind, it becomes necessary to understand what are the faculties, intellectual and corporeal, to the development and exercise of which their peculiar condition is best adapted, so it is equally necessary to understand how far, and in what manner, their moral constitution is likely to be affected by the insulated position in which they are placed. The blind man, shut up within the precincts of his own microcosm, is subjected to influences of a very different complexion from the bulk of mankind, inasmuch as each of the senses is best fitted to the

introduction of a certain class of ideas into the mind, and he is deprived of that one through which the rest of his species receive by far the greatest number of theirs. Thus it will be readily understood that his notions of modesty and delicacy may a good deal differ from those of the world at large. The blind man of Puisseaux confessed that he could not comprehend why it should be reckoned improper to expose one part of the person rather than another. Indeed, the conventional rules, so necessarily adopted in society in this relation, might seem in a great degree superfluous in a blind community.

The blind man would seem, also, to be less likely to be endowed with the degree of sensibility usual with those who enjoy the blessing of sight. It is difficult to say how much of our early education depends on the looks, the frowns, the smiles, the tears, the example, in fact, of those placed over and around us. From all this the blind child is necessarily excluded. These, however, are the great sources of sympathy. We feel little for the joys or the sorrows which we do not witness. "Out of sight, out of mind," says the old proverb. Hence people are so ready to turn away from distress which they cannot, or their avarice will not suffer them to relieve. Hence, too, persons whose compassionate hearts would bleed at the infliction of an act of cruelty on so large an animal as a horse or a dog, for example, will crush without concern a wilderness of insects, whose delicate organization and whose bodily agonies are imperceptible to the naked eye. The slightest injury

occurring in our own presence affects us infinitely more than the tidings of the most murderous battle, or the sack of the most populous and flourishing city at the extremity of the globe. Yet such, without much exaggeration, is the relative position of the blind, removed by their infirmity at a distance from the world, from the daily exhibition of those mingled scenes of grief and gladness which have their most important uses, perhaps, in calling forth our sympathies for our fellow-creatures.

It has been affirmed that the situation of the blind is unpropitious to religious sentiment. They are necessarily insensible to the grandeur of the spectacle which forces itself upon our senses every day of our existence. The magnificent map of the heavens, with

> "Every star
> Which the clear concave of a winter's night
> Pours on the eye,"

is not unrolled for them. The revolutions of the seasons, with all their beautiful varieties of form and color, and whatever glories of the creation lift the soul in wonder and gratitude to the Creator, are not for them. Their world is circumscribed by the little circle which they can span with their own arms. All beyond has for them no real existence. This seems to have passed within the mind of the mathematician Saunderson, whose notions of a Deity would seem to have been, to the last, exceedingly vague and unsettled. The clergyman who visited him in his latter hours endeavored to impress upon him the evidence of a God

as afforded by the astonishing mechanism of the universe. Alas!" said the dying philosopher, "I have been condemned to pass my life in darkness, and you speak to me of prodigies which I cannot comprehend, and which can only be felt by you and those who see like you." When reminded of the faith of Newton, Leibnitz, and Clarke, minds from which he had drunk so deeply of instruction, and for whom he entertained the profoundest veneration, he remarked, "The testimony of Newton is not so strong for me as that of Nature was for him: Newton believed on the word of God himself, while I am reduced to believe on that of Newton." He expired with this ejaculation on his lips: "God of Newton, have mercy on me!"

These, however, may be considered as the peevish ebullitions of a naturally sceptical and somewhat disappointed spirit, impatient of an infirmity which obstructed, as he conceived, his advancement in the career of science to which he had so zealously devoted himself. It was in allusion to this, undoubtedly, that he depicted his life as having been "one long desire and continued privation."

It is far more reasonable to believe that there are certain peculiarities in the condition of the blind which more than counterbalance the unpropitious circumstances above described, and which have a decided tendency to awaken devotional sentiment in their minds. They are the subjects of a grievous calamity, which, as in all such cases, naturally disposes the heart to sober reflection,

and, when permanent and irremediable, to passive resignation. Their situation necessarily excludes most of those temptations which so sorely beset us in the world,—those tumultuous passions which, in the general rivalry, divide man from man and embitter the sweet cup of social life,—those appetites which degrade us to the level of the brutes. They are subjected, on the contrary, to the most healthful influences. Their occupations are of a tranquil, and oftentimes of a purely intellectual, character. Their pleasures are derived from the endearments of domestic intercourse, and the attentions almost always conceded to persons in their dependent condition must necessarily beget a reciprocal kindliness of feeling in their own bosoms. In short, the uniform tenor of their lives is such as naturally to dispose them to resignation, serenity, and cheerfulness; and accordingly, as far as our own experience goes, these have usually been the characteristics of the blind.

Indeed, the cheerfulness almost universally incident to persons deprived of sight leads us to consider blindness as, on the whole, a less calamity than deafness. The deaf man is continually exposed to the sight of pleasures and to society in which he can take no part. He is the guest at a banquet of which he is not permitted to partake, the spectator at a theatre where he cannot comprehend a syllable. If the blind man is excluded from sources of enjoyment equally important, he has at least the advantage of not perceiving, and not even comprehending, what he has lost. It may be added that perhaps the greatest privation con-

sequent on blindness is the inability to read, as that on deafness is the loss of the pleasures of society. Now, the eyes of another may be made in a great degree to supply this defect of the blind man, while no art can afford a corresponding substitute to the deaf for the privations to which he is doomed in social intercourse. He cannot hear with the ears of another. As, however, it is undeniable that blindness makes one more dependent than deafness, we may be content with the conclusion that the former would be the most eligible for the rich, and the latter for the poor. Our remarks will be understood as applying to those only who are wholly destitute of the faculties of sight and hearing. A person afflicted only with a partial derangement or infirmity of vision is placed in the same tantalizing predicament above described of the deaf, and is, consequently, found to be usually of a far more impatient and irritable temperament, and, consequently, less happy, than the totally blind. With all this, we doubt whether there be one of our readers, even should he assent to the general truth of our remarks, who would not infinitely prefer to incur partial to total blindness, and deafness to either. Such is the prejudice in favor of eyes!

Patience, perseverance, habits of industry, and, above all, a craving appetite for knowledge, are sufficiently common to be considered as characteristics of the blind, and have tended greatly to facilitate their education, which must otherwise prove somewhat tedious, and, indeed, doubtful as to its results, considering the formidable character of

the obstacles to be encountered. A curious instance of perseverance in overcoming such obstacles occurred in Paris, when the institutions for the deaf and dumb and for the blind were assembled under the same roof in the convent of the Célestines. The pupils of the two seminaries, notwithstanding the apparently insurmountable barrier interposed between them by their respective infirmities, contrived to open a communication with each other, which they carried on with the greatest vivacity.

It was probably the consideration of those moral qualities, as well as of the capacity for improvement which we have described as belonging to the blind, which induced the benevolent Haüy, in conjunction with the Philanthropic Society of Paris, to open there, in 1784, the first regular seminary for their education ever attempted. This institution underwent several modifications, not for the better, during the revolutionary period which followed; until, in 1816, it was placed on the respectable basis on which it now exists, under the direction of Dr. Guillié, whose untiring exertions have been blessed with the most beneficial results.

We shall give a brief view of the course of education pursued under his direction, as exhibited by him in the valuable treatise to which we have already referred, occasionally glancing at the method adopted in the corresponding institution at Edinburgh.

The fundamental object proposed in every scheme of education for the blind is, to direct the attention of the pupil to those studies and me-

chanic arts which he will be able afterwards to pursue by means of his own exertions and resources, without any external aid. The sense of touch is the one, therefore, almost exclusively relied on. The fingers are the eyes of the blind. They are taught to read in Paris by feeling the surface of metallic types, and in Edinburgh by means of letters raised on a blank leaf of paper. If they are previously acquainted with spelling, which may be easily taught them before entering the institution, they learn to discriminate the several letters with great facility. Their perceptions become so fine by practice that they can discern even the finest print, and, when the fingers fail them, readily distinguish it by applying the tongue. A similar method is employed for instructing them in figures; the notation-table invented by Saunderson, and once used in the Paris seminary, having been abandoned as less simple and obvious, although his symbols for the representation of geometrical diagrams are still retained.

As it would be labor lost to learn the art of reading without having books to read, various attempts have been made to supply this desideratum. The first hint of the form now adopted for the impression of these books was suggested by the appearance exhibited on the reverse side of a copy as removed fresh from the printing-press. In imitation of this, a leaf of paper of a firm texture is forcibly impressed with types unstained by ink, and larger than the ordinary size, until a sufficiently bold relief has been obtained to enable the

blind person to distinguish the characters by the touch. The French have adopted the Italian hand, or one very like it, for the fashion of the letters, while the Scotch have invented one more angular and rectilinear, which, besides the advantage of greater compactness, is found better suited to accurate discrimination by the touch than smooth and extended curves and circles.

Several important works have been already printed on this plan, viz., a portion of the Scriptures, catechisms, and offices for daily prayer; grammars in the Greek, Latin, French, English, Italian, and Spanish languages; a Latin *selecta*, a geography, a course of general history, a selection from English poets and prose-writers, a course of literature, with a compilation of the choicest specimens of French eloquence. With all this, the art of printing for the blind is still in its infancy. The characters are so unwieldy, and the leaves (which cannot be printed on the reverse side, as this would flatten the letters upon the other) are necessarily so numerous, as to make the volume exceedingly bulky, and of course expensive. The Gospel of St. John, for example, expands into three large octavo volumes. Some farther improvement must occur, therefore, before the invention can become extensively useful. There can be no reason to doubt of such a result eventually, for it is only by long and repeated experiment that the art of printing in the usual way, and every other art, indeed, has been brought to its present perfection. Perhaps some mode may be adopted like that of stenography, which, although encumbering

the learner with some additional difficulties at first, may abundantly compensate him in the condensed forms and consequently cheaper and more numerous publications which could be afforded by it. Perhaps ink or some other material of greater consistency than that ordinarily used in printing may be devised, which, when communicated by the type to the paper, will leave a character sufficiently raised to be distinguished by the touch. We have known a blind person able to decipher the characters in a piece of music to which the ink had been imparted more liberally than usual. In the mean time, what has been already done has conferred a service on the blind which we, who become insensible from the very prodigality of our blessings, cannot rightly estimate. The glimmering of the taper, which is lost in the blaze of day, is sufficient to guide the steps of the wanderer in darkness. The unsealed volume of Scripture will furnish him with the best sources of consolation under every privation; the various grammars are so many keys with which to unlock the stores of knowledge to enrich his after-life; and the selections from the most beautiful portions of elegant literature will afford him a permanent source of recreation and delight.

One method used for instruction in writing is, to direct the pencil, or stylus, in a groove cut in the fashion of the different letters. Other modes, however, too complex for description here, are resorted to, by which the blind person is enabled not only to write, but to read what he has thus traced. A portable writing-case for this purpose

has also been invented by one of the blind, who, it is observed, are the most ingenious in supplying, as they are best acquainted with, their own wants. A very simple method of epistolary correspondence, by means of a string-alphabet, as it is called, consisting of a cord or riband in which knots of various dimensions represent certain classes of letters, has been devised by two blind men at Edinburgh. This contrivance, which is so simple that it can be acquired in an hour's time by the most ordinary capacity, is asserted to have the power of conveying ideas with equal precision with the pen. A blind lady of our acquaintance, however, whose fine understanding and temper have enabled her to surmount many of the difficulties of her situation, after a trial of this invention, gives the preference to the mode usually adopted by her of pricking the letters on the paper with a pin,—an operation which she performs with astonishing rapidity, and which, in addition to the advantage possessed by the string-alphabet of being legible by the touch, answers more completely the purposes of epistolary correspondence, since it may be readily interpreted by any one on being held up to the light.

The scheme of instruction at the institution for the blind in Paris comprehends geography, history, the Greek and Latin, together with the French, Italian, and English languages, arithmetic and the higher branches of mathematics, music, and some of the most useful mechanic arts. For mathematics the pupils appear to discover a natural aptitude, many of them attaining such profi-

ciency as not only to profit by the public lectures of the most eminent professors in the sciences, but to carry away the highest prizes in the lyceums in a competition with those who possess the advantages of sight. In music, as we have before remarked, they all make greater or less proficiency. They are especially instructed in the organ, which, from its frequency in the churches, affords one of the most obvious means of obtaining a livelihood.

The method of tuition adopted is that of mutual instruction. The blind are ascertained to learn most easily and expeditiously from those in the same condition with themselves. Two male teachers, with one female, are in this way found adequate to the superintendence of eighty scholars, which, considering the obstacles to be encountered, must be admitted to be a small apparatus for the production of such extensive results.

In teaching them the mechanic arts, two principles appear to be kept in view, namely, to select such for each individual respectively as may be best adapted to his future residence and destination; the trades, for example, most suitable for a sea-port being those least so for the country, and *vice versa*. Secondly, to confine their attention to such occupations as from their nature are most accessible to, and which can be most perfectly attained by, persons in their situation. It is absurd to multiply obstacles from the mere vanity of conquering them.

Printing is an art for which the blind show particular talent, going through all the processes of composing, serving the press, and distributing the

types with the same accuracy with those who can see. Indeed, much of this mechanical occupation with the *clairvoyans* (we are in want of some such compendious phrase in our language) appears to be the result rather of habit than any exercise of the eye. The blind print all the books for their own use. They are taught also to spin, to knit, in which last operation they are extremely ready, knitting very finely, with open work, etc., and are much employed by the Parisian hosiers in the manufacture of elastic vests, shirts, and petticoats. They make purses, delicately embroidered with figures of animals and flowers, whose various tints are selected with perfect propriety. The fingers of the females are observed to be particularly adapted to this nicer sort of work, from their superior delicacy, ordinarily, to those of men. They are employed also in manufacturing girths, in netting in all its branches, in making shoes of list, plush, cloth, colored skin, and list carpets, of which a vast number is annually disposed of. Weaving is particularly adapted to the blind, who perform all the requisite manipulation without any other assistance but that of setting up the warp. They manufacture whips, straw bottoms for chairs, coarse straw hats, rope, cord, pack-thread, baskets, straw, rush, and plush mats, which are very salable in France.

The articles manufactured in the Asylum for the Blind in Scotland are somewhat different; and, as they show for what an extensive variety of occupations they may be qualified in despite of their infirmity, we will take the liberty, at the

hazard of being somewhat tedious, of quoting the catalogue of them exhibited in one of their advertisements. The articles offered for sale consist of cotton and linen cloths, ticked and striped Hollands, towelling and diapers, worsted net for fruit-trees; hair-cloth, hair-mats, and hair-ropes; basket-work of every description; hair, India hemp, and straw door-mats; saddle-girths; ropes and twines of all kinds; netting for sheep-pens; garden and onion twine-nets; fishing-nets, beehives, mattresses, and cushions; feather-beds, bolsters, and pillows; mattresses and beds of every description cleaned and repaired. The labors in this department are performed by the boys. The girls are employed in sewing, knitting stockings, spinning, making fine banker's twine, and various works besides, usually executed by well-educated females.

Such is the emulation of the blind, according to Dr. Guillié, in the institution of Paris, that hitherto there has been no necessity of stimulating their exertions by the usual motives of reward or punishment. Delighted with their sensible progress in vanquishing the difficulties incident to their condition, they are content if they can but place themselves on a level with the more fortunate of their fellow-creatures. And it is observed that many, who in the solitude of their own homes have failed in their attempts to learn some of the arts taught in this institution, have acquired a knowledge of them with great alacrity when cheered by the sympathy of individuals involved in the same calamity with themselves, and with whom, of

course, they could compete with equal probability of success.

The example of Paris has been followed in the principal cities in most of the other countries of Europe: in England, Scotland, Russia, Prussia, Austria, Switzerland, Holland, and Denmark. These establishments, which are conducted on the same general principles, have adopted a plan of education more or less comprehensive, some of them, like those of Paris and Edinburgh, involving the higher branches of intellectual education, and others, as in London and Liverpool, confining themselves chiefly to practical arts. The results, however, have been in the highest degree cheering to the philanthropist in the light thus poured in upon minds to which all the usual avenues were sealed up,—in the opportunity afforded them of developing those latent powers which had been hitherto wasted in inaction, and in the happiness thus imparted to an unfortunate class of beings, who now for the first time were permitted to assume their proper station in society, and, instead of encumbering, to contribute by their own exertions to the general prosperity.

We rejoice that the inhabitants of our own city have been the first to give an example of such beneficent institutions in the New World. And it is principally with the view of directing the attention of the public towards it that we have gone into a review of what has been effected in this way in Europe. The credit of having first suggested the undertaking here is due to our townsman, Dr. John D. Fisher, through whose exertions, aided

by those of several other benevolent individuals, the subject was brought before the Legislature of this State, and an act of incorporation was granted to the petitioners, bearing date March 2d, 1829, authorizing them, under the title of the "New England Asylum for the Blind," to hold property, receive donations and bequests, and to exercise the other functions usually appertaining to similar corporations.

A resolution was subsequently passed, during the same session, requiring the selectmen of the several towns throughout the commonwealth to make returns of the number of blind inhabitants, with their ages, periods of blindness, personal condition, etc. By far the larger proportion of these functionaries, however, with a degree of apathy which does them very little credit, paid no attention whatever to this requisition. By the aid of such as did comply with it, and by means of circulars addressed to the clergymen of the various parishes, advices have been received from one hundred and forty-one towns, comprising somewhat less than half of the whole number within the State. From this imperfect estimate it would appear that the number of blind persons in these towns amounts to two hundred and forty-three, of whom more than one-fifth are under thirty years of age, which period is assigned as the limit within which they cannot fail of receiving all the benefit to be derived from the system of instruction pursued in the institutions for the blind.

The proportion of the blind to our whole popu-

lation, as founded on the above estimate, is somewhat higher than that established by Zeune for the corresponding latitudes in Europe, where blindness decreases in advancing from the equator to the poles, it being computed in Egypt at the rate of one to one hundred, and in Norway of one to one thousand, which last is conformable to ours.

Assuming the preceding estimate as the basis, it will appear that there are about five hundred blind persons in the State of Massachusetts at the present moment; and, adopting the census of 1820, there could not at that time, according to the same rate, be less than sixteen hundred and fifty in all New England, one-fifth being under thirty years of age; a number which, as the blind are usually retired from public observation, far exceeds what might be conceived on a cursory inspection.

From the returns it would appear that a large proportion of the blind in Massachusetts are in humble circumstances, and a still larger proportion of those in years indigent or paupers. This is imputable to their having learned no trade or profession in their youth, so that, when deprived of their natural guardians, they have necessarily become a charge upon the public.

Since the year 1825 an appropriation has been continued by the Legislature for the purpose of maintaining a certain number of pupils at the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford. A resolution was obtained during the last session of the General Court authorizing the governor to

pay over to the Asylum for the Blind whatever balance of the sum thus appropriated might remain in the treasury unexpended at the end of the current year, and the same with every subsequent year to which the grant extended, unless otherwise advised. Seven hundred dollars only have been received as the balance of the past year, a sum obviously inadequate to the production of any important result, and far inferior to what had been anticipated by the friends of the measure. On the whole, we are inclined to doubt whether this will be found the most suitable mode of creating resources for the asylum. Although, in fact, it disposes only of the superfluity, it has the appearance of subtracting from the positive revenues of the Deaf and Dumb, an institution of equal merit and claims with any other whatever. The Asylum for the Blind is an establishment of too much importance to be left thus dependent on a precarious contingent, and is worthy, were it only in an economical point of view, of being placed by the State on some more secure and ample basis.

As it is, the want of funds opposes a sensible obstruction to its progress. The pressure of the times has made the present moment exceedingly unfavorable to personal solicitation, although so much has been effected in this way, through the liberality of a few individuals, that, as we understand, preparations are now making for procuring the requisite instructors and apparatus on a moderate and somewhat reduced scale.

As to the comprehensiveness of the scheme of education to be pursued at the asylum, whether it

shall embrace intellectual culture or be confined simply to the mechanic arts, this must, of course, be ultimately determined by the extent of its resources. We trust, however, it will be enabled to adopt the former arrangement, at least so far as to afford the pupils an acquaintance with the elements of the more popular sciences. There is such a diffusion of liberal knowledge among all classes in this country, that if the blind are suffered to go without any tincture of it from the institution, they will always, whatever be the skill acquired by them in mechanical occupations, continue to feel a sense of their own mental inferiority. The connection of these higher with the more direct objects of the institution will serve, moreover, to give it greater dignity and importance. And while it will open sources of knowledge from which many may be in a situation to derive permanent consolation, it will instruct the humblest individual in what may be of essential utility to him, as writing and arithmetic, for example, in his intercourse with the world.

To what extent it is desirable that the asylum be placed on a charitable foundation is another subject of consideration. This, we believe, is the character of most of the establishments in Europe. That in Scotland, for instance, contains about a hundred subjects, who, with their families included, amount to two hundred and fifty souls, all supported from the labors of the blind, conjointly with the funds of the institution. This is undoubtedly one of the noblest and most discriminating charities in the world. It seems probable, however,

that this is not the plan best adapted to our exigencies. We want not to maintain the blind, but to put them in the way of contributing to their own maintenance. By placing the expenses of tuition and board as low as possible, the means of effecting this will be brought within the reach of a large class of them; and for the rest, it will be obvious economy in the State to provide them with the means of acquiring an education at once that may enable them to contribute permanently towards their own support, which, in some shape or other, is now chargeable on the public. Perhaps, however, some scheme may be devised for combining both these objects, if this be deemed preferable to the adoption of either exclusively.

We are convinced that, as far as the institution is to rely for its success on public patronage, it will not be disappointed. If once successfully in operation and brought before the public eye, it cannot fail of exciting a very general sympathy, which, in this country, has never been refused to the calls of humanity. No one, we think, who has visited the similar endowments in Paris or in Edinburgh will easily forget the sensations which he experienced on witnessing so large a class of his unfortunate fellow-creatures thus restored from intellectual darkness to the blessings, if we may so speak, of light and liberty. There is no higher evidence of the worth of the human mind than its capacity of drawing consolation from its own resources under so heavy a privation; so that it not only can exhibit resignation and cheerfulness, but

energy to burst the fetters with which it is encumbered.

Who could refuse his sympathy to the success of these efforts, or withhold from the subject of them the means of attaining his natural level and usefulness in society, from which circumstances less favorable to him than to ourselves have hitherto excluded him?

IRVING'S CONQUEST OF GRANADA*

(October, 1829)

ALMOST as many qualifications may be demanded for a perfect historian, indeed, the Abbé Mably has enumerated as many, as Cicero stipulates for a perfect orator. He must be strictly impartial; a lover of truth under all circumstances, and ready to declare it at all hazards: he must be deeply conversant with whatever may bring into relief the character of the people he is depicting, not merely with their laws, constitution, general resources, and all the other more visible parts of the machinery of government, but with the nicer moral and social relations, the informing spirit which gives life to the whole, but escapes the eye of a vulgar observer. If he has to do with other ages and nations, he must transport himself into them, expatriating himself, as it were, from his own, in order to get the very form and pressure of the times he is delineating. He must be conscientious in his attention to geography, chronology, etc., an inaccuracy in which has been fatal to more than one good philosophical history; and, mixed up with all these drier details, he must display the various powers of a novelist or dramatist, throwing his characters into suitable lights and shades, disposing his scenes so as to awaken and

* "A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada. By Fray Antonio Agapida." 1829: 2 vols. 19mo. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey.

maintain an unflagging interest, and diffusing over the whole that finished style without which his work will only become a magazine of materials for the more elegant edifices of subsequent writers. He must be—in short, there is no end to what a perfect historian must be and do. It is hardly necessary to add that such a monster never did and never will exist.

But, although we cannot attain to perfect excellence in this or any other science in this world, considerable approaches have been made to it, and different individuals have arisen at different periods, possessed in an eminent degree of some of the principal qualities which go to make up the aggregate of the character we have been describing. The peculiar character of these qualities will generally be determined in the writer by that of the age in which he lives. Thus, the earlier historians of Greece and Rome sought less to instruct than to amuse. They filled their pictures with dazzling and seductive images. In their researches into antiquity, they were not startled by the marvellous, like the more prudish critics of our day, but welcomed it as likely to stir the imaginations of their readers. They seldom interrupted the story by impertinent reflection. They bestowed infinite pains on the costume, the style of their history, and, in fine, made everything subordinate to the main purpose of conveying an elegant and interesting *narrative*. Such was Herodotus, such Livy, and such, too, the earlier chroniclers of modern Europe, whose pages glow with the picturesque and brilliant pageants of an

age of chivalry. These last, as well as Herodotus, may be said to have written in the infancy of their nations, when the imagination is more willingly addressed than the understanding. Livy, who wrote in a riper age, lived, nevertheless, in a court and a period where tranquillity and opulence disposed the minds of men to elegant recreation rather than to severe discipline and exertion.

As, however, the nation advanced in years, or became oppressed with calamity, history also assumed a graver complexion. Fancy gave way to reflection. The mind, no longer invited to rove abroad in quest of elegant and alluring pictures, was driven back upon itself, speculated more deeply, and sought for support under the external evils of life in moral and philosophical truth. Description was abandoned for the study of character; men took the place of events; and the romance was converted into the drama. Thus it was with Tacitus, who lived under those imperial monsters who turned Rome into a charnel-house, and his compact narratives are filled with moral and political axioms sufficiently numerous to make a volume; and, indeed, Brotier has made one of them in his edition of the historian. The same philosophical spirit animates the page of Thucydides, himself one of the principal actors in the long, disastrous struggle that terminated in the ruin of his nation.

But, notwithstanding the deeper and more comprehensive thought of these later writers, there was still a wide difference between the complexion given to history under their hands and that which

it has assumed in our time. We would not be understood as determining, but simply as discriminating, their relative merits. The Greeks and Romans lived when the world, at least when the mind, was in its comparative infancy,—when fancy and feeling were most easily and loved most to be excited. They possessed a finer sense of beauty than the moderns. They were infinitely more solicitous about the external dress, the finish, and all that makes up the poetry of a composition. Poetry, indeed, mingled in their daily pursuits as well as pleasures; it determined their gravest deliberations. The command of their armies was given, not to the best general, but ofttimes to the most eloquent orator. Poetry entered into their religion, and created those beautiful monuments of architecture and sculpture which the breath of time has not tarnished. It entered into their philosophy; and no one confessed its influence more deeply than he who would have banished it from his republic. It informed the souls of their orators, and prompted those magnificent rhapsodies which fall lifeless enough from the stammering tongue of the school-boy, but which once awaked to ecstasy the living populace of Athens. It entered deeply even into their latest history. It was first exhibited in the national chronicles of Homer. It lost little of its coloring, though it conformed to the general laws of prosaic composition, under Herodotus. And it shed a pleasing grace over the sober pages of Thucydides and Xenophon. The muse, indeed, was stripped of her wings; she no longer made her airy excursions

into the fairy regions of romance; but, as she moved along the earth, the sweetest wild flowers seemed to spring up unbidden at her feet. We would not be understood as implying that Grecian history was ambitious of florid or meretricious ornament. Nothing could be more simple than its general plan and execution; far too simple, we fear, for imitation in our day. Thus Thucydides, for example, distributes his events most inartificially, according to the regular revolutions of the seasons; and the rear of every section is brought up with the same eternal repetition of ἔτος τῷ πολέμῳ ἐτέλεντα τῷδε, ὃν Θουκυδίδης ξυνέγραψε. But in the fictitious speeches with which he has illumined his narrative he has left the choicest specimens of Attic eloquence; and he elaborated his general diction into so high a finish that Demosthenes, as is well known, in the hope of catching some of his rhetorical graces, thought him worthy of being thrice transcribed with his own hand.

Far different has been the general conception, as well as execution, of history by the moderns. In this, however, it was accommodated to the exigencies of their situation, and, as with the ancients, still reflected the spirit of the age. If the Greeks lived in the infancy of civilization, the contemporaries of our day may be said to have reached its prime. The same revolution has taken place as in the growth of an individual. The vivacity of the imagination has been blunted, but reason is matured. The credulity of youth has given way to habits of cautious inquiry, and sometimes to a phlegmatic scepticism. The productions, indeed,

which first appeared in the doubtful twilight of morning exhibited the love of the marvellous, the light and fanciful spirit of a green and tender age. But a new order of things commenced as the stores of classical learning were unrolled to the eye of the scholar. The mind seemed at once to enter upon the rich inheritance which the sages of antiquity had been ages in accumulating, and to start, as it were, from the very point where they had terminated their career. Thus raised by learning and experience, it was enabled to take a wider view of its proper destiny,—to understand that truth is the greatest good, and to discern the surest method of arriving at it. The Christian doctrine, too, inculcated that the end of being was best answered by a life of active usefulness, and not by one of abstract contemplation, or selfish indulgence, or passive fortitude, as variously taught by the various sects of antiquity. Hence a new standard of moral excellence was formed. Pursuits were estimated by their practical results, and the useful was preferred to the ornamental. Poetry, confined to her own sphere, was no longer permitted to mingle in the councils of philosophy. Intellectual and physical science, instead of floating on vague speculation, as with the ancients, was established on careful induction and experiment. The orator, instead of adorning himself with the pomp and garniture of verse, sought only to acquire greater dexterity in the management of the true weapons of debate. The passions were less frequently assailed, the reason more. A wider field was open to the historian. He was no longer to

concoct his narrative, if the scene lay in a remote period, from the superficial rumors of oral tradition. Libraries were to be ransacked; medals and monuments to be studied; obsolete manuscripts to be deciphered. Every assertion was to be fortified by an authority; and the opinions of others, instead of being admitted on easy faith, were to be carefully collated, and the balance of probability struck between them. With these qualifications of antiquarian and critic, the modern historian was to combine that of the philosopher, deducing from his mass of facts general theorems, and giving to them their most extended application.

By all this process, poetry lost much, but philosophy gained more. The elegant arts sensibly declined, but the most important and recondite secrets of nature were laid open. All those sciences which have for their object the happiness and improvement of the species, the science of government, of political economy, of education—natural and experimental science—were carried far beyond the boundaries which they could possibly have reached under the ancient systems.

The peculiar forms of historic writing, as it exists with the moderns, were not fully developed until the last century. It may be well to notice the intermediate shape which it assumed before it reached this period in Spain and Italy, but especially this latter country, in the sixteenth century. The Italian historians of that age seem to have combined the generalizing and reflecting spirit characteristic of the moderns, with the simple and

graceful forms of composition which have descended to us from the ancients. Machiavelli, in particular, may remind us of some recent statue which exhibits all the lineaments and proportions of a contemporary, but to which the sculptor has given a sort of antique dignity by enveloping it in the folds of the Roman toga. No one of the Spanish historians is to be named with him. Mariana, who enjoys among them the greatest celebrity, has, it is true, given to his style, both in the Latin and Castilian, the elegant transparency of an ancient classic; but the mass of detail is not quickened by a single spark of philosophy or original reflection. Mariana was a monk, one of a community who have formed the most copious but in many respects the most incompetent chroniclers in the world, cut off as they are from all sympathy with any portion of the species save their own order, and predisposed by education to admit as truth the grossest forgeries of fanaticism. What can their narratives be worth, distorted thus by prejudice and credulity? The Aragonese writers, and Zurita in particular, though far inferior as to the literary execution of their works, exhibit a pregnant thought and a manly independence of expression far superior to the Jesuit Mariana.*

* The Jesuits were neither monks nor friars but formed one of the orders of the regular clergy, priests living in common and occupied with the various works of the ministry. Mariana therefore was not a monk. He was Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome, 1561–65,—was therefore a Secretary on Divinity in Sicily and in Paris, and in 1574 settled at Toledo, where he devoted himself to the composition of his famous history. He died in 1623.—M.

The Italian historians of the sixteenth century, moreover, had the good fortune not only to have been eye-witnesses but to have played prominent parts in the events which they commemorated. And this gives a vitality to their touches which is in vain to be expected from those of a closet politician. This rare union of public and private excellence is delicately intimated in the inscription on Guicciardini's monument, "*Cujus negotium, an otium, gloriosius incertum.*"

The personage by whom the present laws of historic composition may be said to have been first arranged into a regular system was Voltaire. This extraordinary genius, whose works have been productive of so much mingled good and evil, discovers in them many traces of a humane and beneficent disposition. Nowhere is his invective more keenly directed than against acts of cruelty and oppression,—above all, of religious oppression. He lived in an age of crying abuses both in Church and government. Unfortunately, he employed a weapon against them whose influence is not to be controlled by the most expert hand. The envenomed shaft of irony not only wounds the member at which it is aimed, but diffuses its poison to the healthiest and remotest regions of the body.

The free and volatile temper of Voltaire forms a singular contrast with his resolute pertinacity of purpose. Bard, philosopher, historian, this literary Proteus animated every shape with the same mischievous spirit of philosophy. It never deserted him, even in the most sportive sallies of his fancy. It seasons his romances equally with his

gravest pieces in the encyclopedia; his familiar letters and most licentious doggerel no less than his histories. The leading object of this philosophy may be defined by the single cant phrase, " the abolition of prejudices." But in Voltaire prejudices were too often confounded with principles.

In his histories, he seems ever intent on exhibiting, in the most glaring colors, the manifold inconsistencies of the human race; in showing the contradiction between profession and practice; in contrasting the magnificence of the apparatus with the impotence of the results. The enormous abuses of Christianity are brought into juxtaposition with the most meritorious features in other religions, and thus all are reduced to nearly the same level. The credulity of one half of mankind is set in opposition to the cunning of the other. The most momentous events are traced to the most insignificant causes, and the ripest schemes of wisdom are shown to have been baffled by the intervention of the most trivial accidents. Thus, the conduct of the world seems to be regulated by chance; the springs of human action are resolved into selfishness; and religion, of whatever denomination, is only a different form of superstition. It is true that his satire is directed not so much against any particular system as the vices of that system; but the result left upon the mind is not a whit less pernicious. His philosophical romance of " Candide " affords a good exemplification of his manner. The thesis of perfect optimism in this world, at which he levels this *jeu d'esprit,* is manifestly indefensible. But then he supports his

position with such an array of gross and hyperbolical atrocities, without the intervention of a single palliative circumstance, and, withal, in such a tone of keen derision, that if any serious impression be left on the mind it can be no other than that of a baleful, withering scepticism. The historian rarely so far forgets his philosophy as to kindle into high and generous emotion the glow of patriotism, or moral and religious enthusiasm. And hence, too, his style, though always graceful, and often seasoned with the sallies of a piquant wit, never rises into eloquence or sublimity.

Voltaire has been frequently reproached for want of historical accuracy. But, if we make due allowance for the sweeping tenor of his reflections and for the infinite variety of his topics, we shall be slow in giving credit to this charge." * He was, indeed, oftentimes misled by his inveterate Pyrrhonism; a defect, when carried to the excess in which he indulged it, almost equally fatal to the historian with credulity or superstition. His researches frequently led him into dark, untravelled regions; but the aliment which he imported thence served only too often to minister to his pernicious philosophy. He resembled the allegorical agents of Milton, paving a way across the gulf of Chaos for the spirits of mischief to enter more easily upon the earth.

Voltaire effected a no less sensible revolution in the structure than in the spirit of history. Thus,

* Indeed, Hallam and Warton—the one as diligent a laborer in the field of civil history as the other has been in literary—both bear testimony to his general veracity.

instead of following the natural consecutive order of events, the work was distributed, on the principle of a *Catalogue raisonné*, into sections arranged according to their subjects, and copious dissertations were introduced into the body of the narrative. Thus, in his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, etc., one chapter is devoted to letters, another to religion, a third to manners, and so on. And in the same way, in his "Age of Louis the Fourteenth," he has thrown his various illustrations of the policy of government, and of the social habits of the court, into a detached portion at the close of the book.

This would seem to be deviating from the natural course of things as they occur in the world, where the multifarious pursuits of pleasure and business, the lights and shadows, as it were, of life, are daily intermingled in the motley panorama of human existence. But, however artificial this division, it enabled the reader to arrive more expeditiously at the results, for which alone history is valuable, while at the same time it put it in the power of the writer to convey with more certainty and facility his own impressions.

This system was subsequently so much refined upon that Montesquieu, in his "Grandeur et Décadence des Romains," laid no farther stress on historical facts than as they furnished him with illustrations of his particular theorems. Indeed, so little did his work rest upon the veracity of such facts that, although the industry of Niebuhr, or, rather, of Beaufort, has knocked away almost all the foundations of early Rome, Montesquieu's

treatise remains as essentially unimpaired in credit as before. Thus the materials which anciently formed the body of history now served only as ingredients from which its spirit was to be extracted. But this was not always the spirit of truth. And the arbitrary selection as well as disposition of incidents which this new method allowed, and the coloring which they were to receive from the author, made it easy to pervert them to the construction of the wildest hypotheses.

The progress of philosophical history is particularly observable in Great Britain, where it seems to have been admirably suited to the grave, reflecting temper of the people. In the graces of *narrative* they have ever been unequal to their French neighbors. Their ancient chronicles are inferior in spirit and execution to those either of France or Spain; and their more elaborate histories, down to the middle of the eighteenth century, could not in any way compete with the illustrious models of Italy. But soon after this period several writers appeared, exhibiting a combination of qualities, erudition, critical penetration, powers of generalization, and a political sagacity unrivalled in any other age or country.

The influence of the new forms of historical composition, however, was here, as elsewhere, made too frequently subservient to party and sectarian prejudices. Tory histories and Whig histories, Protestant and Catholic histories, successively appeared, and seemed to neutralize each other. The most venerable traditions were exploded as nursery-tales. The statues decreed by antiquity were cast

down, and the characters of miscreants whom the general suffrage of mankind had damned to infamy—of a Dionysius, a Borgia, or a Richard the Third—were now retraced by what Jovius distinguishes as "the golden pen" of the historian, until the reader, bewildered in the maze of uncertainty, is almost ready to join in the exclamation of Lord Orford to his son, "Oh, quote me not history, for that I know to be false!" It is remarkable, indeed, that the last-mentioned monarch, Richard the Third, whose name has become a by-word of atrocity, the burden of the ballad and the moral of the drama, should have been the subject of elaborate vindication by two eminent writers of the most opposite characters, the pragmatical Horace Walpole and the circumspect and conscientious Sharon Turner. The apology of the latter exhibits a technical precision, a severe scrutiny into the authenticity of records, and a nice balancing of contradictory testimony, that give it all the air of a legal investigation. Thus history seems to be conducted on the principles of a judicial process, in which the writer, assuming the functions of an advocate, studiously suppresses whatever may make against his own side, supports himself by the strongest array of evidence which he can muster, discredits as far as possible that of the opposite party, and, by dexterous interpretation and ingenious inference, makes out the most plausible argument for his client that the case will admit.

But these, after all, are only the abuses of philosophical history, and the unseasonable length of

remark into which we have been unwarily led in respect to them may give us the appearance of laying on them greater emphasis than they actually deserve. There are few writers in any country whose judgment has not been sometimes warped by personal prejudices. But it is to the credit of the principal British historians that, however they may have been occasionally under the influence of such human infirmity, they have conducted their researches, in the main, with equal integrity and impartiality. And while they have enriched their writings with the stores of a various erudition, they have digested from these details results of the most enlarged and practical application. History in their hands, although it may have lost much of the simplicity and graphic vivacity which it maintained with the ancients, has gained much more in the amount of useful knowledge and the lessons of sound philosophy which it inculcates.

There is no writer who exhibits more distinctly the full development of the principles of modern history, with all its virtues and defects, than Gibbon. His learning was fully equal to his vast subject. This, commencing with expiring civilization in ancient Rome, continues on until the period of its final and perfect resurrection in Italy in the fifteenth century, and thus may be said to furnish the lights which are to guide us through the long interval of darkness which divides the Old from the Modern world. The range of his subject was fully equal to its duration. Goths, Huns, Tartars, and all the rude tribes of the North are brought upon the stage, together with the more cultivated

natives of the South, the Greeks, Italians, and the intellectual Arab; and, as the scene shifts from one country to another, we behold its population depicted with that peculiarity of physiognomy and studied propriety of costume which belong to dramatic exhibition; for Gibbon was a more vivacious draughtsman than most writers of his school. He was, moreover, deeply versed in geography, chronology, antiquities, verbal criticism,—in short, in all the sciences in any way subsidiary to his art. The extent of his subject permitted him to indulge in those elaborate disquisitions so congenial to the spirit of modern history on the most momentous and interesting topics, while his early studies enabled him to embellish the drier details of his narrative with the charms of a liberal and elegant scholarship.

What, then, was wanting to this accomplished writer? Good faith. His defects were precisely of the class of which we have before been speaking, and his most elaborate efforts exhibit too often the perversion of learning and ingenuity to the vindication of preconceived hypotheses. He cannot, indeed, be convicted of ignorance or literal inaccuracy, as he has triumphantly proved in his discomfiture of the unfortunate Davis. But his disingenuous mode of conducting the argument leads precisely to the same unfair result. Thus, in his celebrated chapters on the "Progress of Christianity," which he tells us were "reduced by three successive revisals from a bulky volume to their present size," he has often slurred over in the text such particulars as might reflect most credit on

the character of the religion, or shuffled them into a note at the bottom of the page, while all that admits of a doubtful complexion in its early propagation is ostentatiously blazoned and set in contrast to the most amiable features of paganism. At the same time, by a style of innuendo that conveys "more than meets the ear," he has contrived, with Iago-like duplicity, to breathe a taint of suspicion on the purity which he dares not openly assail. It would be easy to furnish examples of all this were this the place for them; but the charges have no novelty, and have been abundantly substantiated by others.

It is a consequence of this scepticism in Gibbon, as with Voltaire, that his writings are nowhere warmed with a generous moral sentiment. The most sublime of all spectacles, that of the martyr who suffers for conscience' sake, and this equally whether his creed be founded in truth or error, is contemplated by the historian with the smile, or, rather, sneer, of philosophic indifference. This is not only bad taste, as he is addressing a Christian audience, but he thus voluntarily relinquishes one of the most powerful engines for the movement of human passion, which is never so easily excited as by deeds of suffering, self-devoted heroism.

But, although Gibbon was wholly defective in moral enthusiasm, his style is vivified by a certain exhilarating glow that kindles a corresponding warmth in the bosom of his reader. This may perhaps be traced to his egotism, or, to speak more liberally, to an ardent attachment to his professional pursuits and to his inextinguishable love of

letters. This enthusiasm appears in almost every page of his great work, and enabled him to triumph over all its difficulties. It is particularly conspicuous whenever he touches upon Rome, the *alma mater* of science, whose adopted son he may be said to have been from his earliest boyhood. Whenever he contemplates her fallen fortunes, he mourns over her with the fond solicitude that might become an ancient Roman; and when he depicts her pristine glories, dimly seen through the mist of so many centuries, he does it with such vivid accuracy of conception that the reader, like the traveller who wanders through the excavations of Pompeii, seems to be gazing on the original forms and brilliant colors of antiquity.

To Gibbon's egotism—in its most literal sense, to his personal vanity—may be traced some of the peculiar defects for which his style is conspicuous. The "historian of the Decline and Fall" too rarely forgets his own importance in that of his subject. The consequence which he attaches to his personal labors is shown in a bloated dignity of expression and an ostentation of ornament that contrast whimsically enough with the trifling topics and commonplace thoughts on which, in the course of his long work, they are occasionally employed. He nowhere moves along with the easy freedom of nature, but seems to leap, as it were, from triad to triad by a succession of strained, convulsive efforts. He affected, as he tells us, the light, festive raillery of Voltaire; but his cumbrous imitation of the mercurial Frenchman may remind one, to make use of a homely simile, of the

ass in Æsop's fable, who frisked upon his master in imitation of the sportive gambols of the spaniel. The first two octavo volumes of Gibbon's history were written in a comparatively modest and unaffected manner, for he was then uncertain of the public favor; and, indeed, his style was exceedingly commended by the most competent critics of that day, as Hume, Joseph Warton, and others, as is abundantly shown in their correspondence; but when he had tasted the sweets of popular applause, and had been crowned as the historian of the day, his increased consequence becomes at once visible in the assumed stateliness and magnificence of his bearing. But even after this period, whenever the subject is suited to his style, and when his phlegmatic temper is warmed by those generous emotions of which, as we have said, it was sometimes susceptible, he exhibits his ideas in the most splendid and imposing forms of which the English language is capable.

The most eminent illustrations of the system of historical writing, which we have been discussing, that have appeared in England in the present century, are the works of Mr. Hallam, in which the author, discarding most of the circumstances that go to make up mere narrative, endeavors to fix the attention of the reader on the more important features of constitutional polity, employing his wide range of materials in strict subordination to this purpose.

But, while history has thus been conducted on nearly the same principles in England for the last century, a new path has been struck out in France,

or, rather, an attempt has lately been made there to retrace the old one. M. de Barante, no less estimable as a literary critic than as a historian, in the preliminary remarks to his "Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne," considers the draughts of modern compilers as altogether wanting in the vivacity and freshness of their originals. They tell the reader how he should feel, instead of making him do so. They give him their own results, instead of enabling him, by a fair delineation of incidents, to form his own. And while the early chroniclers, in spite of their unformed and obsolete idiom, are still read with delight, the narratives of the former are too often dry, languid, and uninteresting. He proposes, therefore, by a close adherence to his originals, to extract, as it were, the spirit of their works, without any affectation, however, of their antiquated phraseology, and to exhibit as vivid and veracious a portraiture as possible of the times he is delineating, unbroken by any discussions or reflections of his own. The result has been a work in eleven octavo volumes, which, notwithstanding its bulk, has already passed into four editions.

The two last productions of our countryman Mr. Irving undoubtedly fall within the class of narrative history. To this he seems peculiarly suited by his genius, his fine perception of moral and natural beauty, his power of discriminating the most delicate shades of character and of unfolding a series of events so as to maintain a lively interest in the reader, and a *lactea ubertas* of expression which can impart a living eloquence even to the most commonplace sentiments. Had the

"Life of Columbus" been written by a historian of the other school of which we have been speaking, he would have enlarged with greater circumstantiality on the system adopted by Ferdinand and Isabella for the administration of their colonies and for the regulation of trade; nor would he have neglected to descant on a topic—worn somewhat threadbare, it must be owned—so momentous as the moral and political consequences of the discovery of America; neither would such a writer, in an account of the conquest of Granada, have omitted to collect such particulars as might throw light on the genius, social institutions, and civil polity of the Spanish Arabs. But all these particulars, however pertinent to a philosophical history, would have been entirely out of keeping in Mr. Irving's, and might have produced a disagreeable discordance in the general harmony of his plan.

Mr. Irving has seldom selected a subject better suited to his peculiar powers than the conquest of Granada. Indeed, it would hardly have been possible for one of his warm sensibilities to linger so long among the remains of Moorish magnificence with which Spain is covered, without being interested in the fortunes of a people whose memory has almost passed into oblivion, but who once preserved the "sacred flame" when it had become extinct in every corner of Christendom, and whose influence is still visible on the intellectual culture of Modern Europe. It has been found no easy matter, however, to compile a satisfactory and authentic account of the Arabians, notwithstand-

ing that the number of their historians, cited by D'Herbelot and Casiri, would appear to exceed that of any European nation. The despotic governments of the East have never been found propitious to that independence of opinion so essential to historical composition: "ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias dicere licet." And their copious compilations, prolific in frivolous and barren detail, are too often wholly destitute of the sap and vitality of history.

The social and moral institutions of Arabian Spain experienced a considerable modification from her long intercourse with the Europeans, and she offers a nobler field of research for the chronicler than is to be found in any other country of the Moslem. Notwithstanding this, the Castilian scholars, until of late, have done little towards elucidating the national antiquities of their Saracen brethren; and our most copious notices of their political history, until the recent posthumous publication of Conde, have been drawn from the extracts which M. Cardonne translated from the Arabic Manuscripts in the Royal Library at Paris.*

The most interesting periods of the Saracen dominion in Spain are those embraced by the empire of the Omeyades of Córdova, between the years

* [Since this article was written, the deficiency noticed in the text has been supplied by the translation into English of Al-Makkarí's "Mohammedan Dynasties," with copious notes and illustrations by Don Pascual de Gayangos, a scholar whose acute criticism has enabled him to rectify many of the errors of his laborious predecessors and whose profound Oriental learning sheds a flood of light on both the civil and literary history of the Spanish Arabs.]

755 and 1030, and that of the kingdom of Granada, extending from the middle of the thirteenth to the close of the fifteenth century. The intervening period of their existence in the Peninsula offers only a spectacle of inextricable anarchy. The first of those periods was that in which the Arabs attained their meridian of opulence and power, and in which their general illumination affords a striking contrast with the deep barbarism of the rest of Europe; but it was that, too, in which their character, having been but little affected by contact with the Spaniards, retained most of its original Asiatic peculiarities. This has never been regarded, therefore, by European scholars as a period of great interest in their history, nor has it ever, so far as we are aware, been selected for the purposes of romantic fiction. But when their territories became reduced within the limits of Granada, the Moors had insensibly submitted to the superior influences of their Christian neighbors. Their story, at this time, abounds in passages of uncommon beauty and interest. Their wars were marked by feats of personal prowess and romantic adventure, while the intervals of peace were abandoned to all the license of luxurious revelry. Their character, therefore, blending the various peculiarities of Oriental and European civilization, offers a rich study for the poet and the novelist. As such, it has been liberally employed by the Spaniards, and has not been altogether neglected by the writers of other nations. Thus, Florian, whose sentiments, as well as his style, seem to be always floundering midway

between the regions of prose and poetry, has made out of the story of this people his popular romance of "Gonsalvo of Córdova." It also forms the burden of an Italian epic, entitled "Il Conquista di Granata," by Girolamo Gratiani, a Florentine,—much lauded by his countrymen. The ground, however, before the appearance of Mr. Irving, had not been occupied by any writer of eminence in the English language for the purposes either of romance or history.

The conquest of Granada, to which Mr. Irving has confined himself, so disastrous to the Moors, was one of the most brilliant achievements in the most brilliant period of Spanish history. Nothing is more usual than overweening commendations of antiquity,—the "good old times" whose harsher features, like those of a rugged landscape, lose all their asperity in the distance. But the period of which we are speaking, embracing the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella, at the close of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, was undoubtedly that in which the Spanish nation displayed the fulness of its moral and physical energies, when, escaping from the license of a youthful age, it seems to have reached the prime of manhood and the perfect development of those faculties whose overstrained exertions were soon to be followed by exhaustion and premature decrepitude.

The remnant of Spaniards who, retreating to the mountains of the north, escaped the overwhelming inundation of the Saracens at the beginning of the eighth century, continued to cherish

the free institutions of their Gothic ancestors. The "Fuero Juzgo," the ancient Visi-Gothic code, was still retained by the people of Castile and Leon, and may be said to form the basis of all their subsequent legislation, while in Aragon the dissolution of the primitive monarchy opened the way for even more liberal and equitable forms of government. The independence of character thus fostered by the peculiar constitutions of these petty states was still farther promoted by the circumstances of their situation. Their uninterrupted wars with the infidel—the necessity of winning back from him, inch by inch, as it were, the conquered soil—required the active co-operation of every class of the community, and gave to the mass of the people an intrepidity, a personal consequence, and an extent of immunities, such as were not enjoyed by them in any other country of Europe. The free cities acquired considerable tracts of the reconquered territory, with rights of jurisdiction over them, and sent their representatives to Cortes, nearly a century before a similar privilege was conceded to them in England. Even the peasantry, so degraded at this period throughout the rest of Europe, assumed under this state of things a conscious dignity and importance, which are visible in their manners at this day; and it was in this class, during the late French invasions, that the fire of ancient patriotism revived with greatest force, when it seemed almost extinct in the breasts of the degenerate nobles.

The religious feeling which mingled in their

wars with the infidels gave to their character a tinge of lofty enthusiasm; and the irregular nature of this warfare suggested abundant topics for that popular minstrelsy which acts so powerfully on the passions of a people. The "Poem of the Cid," which appeared, according to Sanchez, before the middle of the twelfth century, contributed in no slight degree, by calling up the most inspiring national recollections, to keep alive the generous glow of patriotism. This influence is not imaginary. Heeren pronounces the "poems of Homer to have been the principal bond which united the Grecian states;" and every one knows the influence exercised over the Scottish peasantry by the Border minstrelsy. Many anecdotes might be quoted to show the veneration universally entertained by the Spaniards, broken, as they were, into as many discordant states as ever swarmed over Greece, for their favorite hero of romance and history. Among others, Mariana relates one of a king of Navarre, who, making an incursion into Castile about a century after the warrior's death, was carrying off a rich booty, when he was met by an abbot of a neighboring convent, with his monks, bearing aloft the standard of the Cid, who implored him to restore the plunder to the inhabitants from whom he had ravished it. And the monarch, moved by the sight of the sacred relic, after complying with his request, escorted back the banner in solemn procession with his whole army to the place of its deposit.

But, while all these circumstances conspired to give an uncommon elevation to the character of

the ancient Spaniard, even of the humblest rank, and while the prerogative of the monarch was more precisely as well as narrowly defined than in most of the other nations of Christendom, the aristocracy of the country was insensibly extending its privileges, and laying the foundation of a power that eventually overshadowed the throne and wellnigh subverted the liberties of the state. In addition to the usual enormous immunities claimed by this order in feudal governments (although there is no reason to believe that the system of feudal tenure obtained in Castile, as it certainly did in Aragon), they enjoyed a constitutional privilege of withdrawing their allegiance from their sovereign on sending him a formal notice of such renunciation, and the sovereign, on his part, was obliged to provide for the security of their estates and families so long as they might choose to continue in such overt rebellion. These anarchical provisions in their constitution did not remain a dead letter, and repeated examples of their pernicious application are enumerated both by the historians of Aragon and Castile. The long minorities with which the latter country was afflicted, moreover, contributed still farther to swell the overgrown power of the privileged orders; and the violent revolution which, in 1368, placed the house of Trastamarre upon the throne, by impairing the revenues, and consequently the authority of the crown, opened the way for the wild uproar which reigned throughout the kingdom during the succeeding century. Alonso de Palencia, a contemporary chronicler, dwells with

melancholy minuteness on the calamities of this unhappy period, when the whole country was split into factions of the nobles, the monarch openly contemned, the commons trodden in the dust, the court become a brothel, the treasury bankrupt, public faith a jest, and private morals too loose and audacious to court even the veil of hypocrisy.

The wise administration of Ferdinand and Isabella could alone have saved the state in this hour of peril. It effected, indeed, a change on the face of things as magical as that produced by the wand of an enchanter in some Eastern tale. Their reign wears a more glorious aspect from its contrast with the turbulent period which preceded it, as the landscape glows with redoubled brilliancy when the sunshine has scattered the tempest. We shall briefly notice some of the features of the policy by which they effected this change.

They obtained from the Cortes an act for the resumption of the improvident grants made by their predecessor, by which means an immense accession of revenue, which had been squandered upon unworthy favorites, was brought back to the royal treasury. They compelled many of the nobility to resign, in favor of the crown, such of its possessions as they had acquired, by force, fraud, or intrigue, during the late season of anarchy. The son of that gallant Marquis Duke of Cadiz, for instance, with whom the reader has become so familiar in Mr. Irving's Chronicle, was stripped of his patrimony of Cadiz and compelled to exchange it for the humbler territory of Arcos, from whence the family henceforth derived their

title. By all these expedients the revenues of the state at the demise of Isabella, were increased twelvefold beyond what they had been at the time of her accession. They reorganized the ancient institution of the "Hermandad,"—a very different association, under their hands, from the "Holy Brotherhood" which we meet with in Gil Blas. Every hundred householders were obliged to equip and maintain a horseman at their joint expense; and this corps furnished a vigilant police in civil emergencies and an effectual aid in war. It was found, moreover, of especial service in suppressing the insurrections and disorders of the nobility. They were particularly solicitous to abolish the right and usage of private war claimed by this haughty order, compelling them on all occasions to refer their disputes to the constituted tribunals of justice. But it was a capital feature in the policy of the Catholic sovereigns to counterbalance the authority of the aristocracy by exalting, as far as prudent, that of the commons. In the various convocations of the national legislature, or Cortes, in this reign, no instance occurs of any city having lost its prescriptive right of furnishing representatives, as had frequently happened under preceding monarchs, who, from negligence or policy, had omitted to summon them.

But it would be tedious to go into all the details of the system employed by Ferdinand and Isabella for the regeneration of the decayed fabric of government; of their wholesome regulations for the encouragement of industry; of their organization of a national militia and an efficient marine; of

the severe decorum which they introduced within the corrupt precincts of the court; of the temporary economy by which they controlled the public expenditures, and of the munificent patronage which they, or, rather, their almoner on this occasion, that most enlightened of bigots, Cardinal Ximenes, dispensed to science and letters. In short, their sagacious provisions were not merely remedial of former abuses, but were intended to call forth all the latent energies of the Spanish character, and, with these excellent materials to erect a constitution of government which should secure to the nation tranquillity at home, and enable it to go forward in its ambitious career of discovery and conquest.

The results were certainly equal to the wisdom of the preparations. The first of the series of brilliant enterprises was the conquest of the Moorish kingdom of Granada,—those rich and lovely regions of the Peninsula, the last retreat of the infidel, and which he had held for nearly eight centuries. This, together with the subsequent occupation of Navarre by the crafty Ferdinand, consolidated the various principalities of Spain into one monarchy, and, by extending its boundaries in the Peninsula to their present dimensions, raised it from a subordinate situation to the first class of European powers. The Italian wars, under the conduct of the "Great Captain," secured to Spain the more specious but less useful acquisition of Naples, and formed that invincible infantry which enabled Charles the Fifth to dictate laws to Europe for nearly half a century. And, lastly, as

if the Old World could not afford a theatre sufficiently vast for their ambition, Columbus gave a New World to Castile and Leon.

Such was the attitude assumed by the nation under the Catholic kings, as they were called. It was the season of hope and youthful enterprise, when the nation seemed to be renewing its ancient energies and to prepare like a giant to run its course. The modern Spaniard who casts his eye over the long interval that has since elapsed, during the first half of which the nation seemed to waste itself on schemes of mad ambition or fierce fanaticism, and in the latter half to sink into a state of paralytic torpor,—the Spaniard, we say, who casts a melancholy glance over this dreary interval will turn with satisfaction to the close of the fifteenth century as the most glorious epoch in the annals of his country. This is the period to which Mr. Irving has introduced us in his late work. And if his portraiture of the Castilian of that day wears somewhat of a romantic and, it may be, incredible aspect to those who contrast it with the present, they must remember that he is only reviving the tints which had faded on the canvas of history. But it is time that we should return from this long digression, into which we have been led by the desire of exhibiting in stronger relief some peculiarities in the situation and spirit of the nation at the period from which Mr. Irving has selected the materials of his last, indeed, his last two publications.

Our author, in his " Chronicle of Granada," has been but slightly indebted to Arabic authorities.

Neither Conde nor Cardonne has expended more than fifty or sixty pages on this humiliating topic; but ample amends have been offered in the copious prolixity of the Castilian writers. The Spaniards can boast a succession of chronicles from the period of the great Saracen invasion. Those of a more early date, compiled in rude Latin, are sufficiently meagre and unsatisfactory; but from the middle of the thirteenth century the stream of history runs full and clear, and their chronicles, composed in the vernacular, exhibit a richness and picturesque variety of incident that gave them inestimable value as a body of genuine historical documents. The reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella were particularly fruitful in these sources of information. History then, like most of the other departments of literature, seemed to be in a state of transition, when the fashions of its more antiquated costume began to mingle insensibly with the peculiarities of the modern; when, in short, the garrulous graces of narration were beginning to be tempered by the tone of grave and philosophical reflection.

We will briefly notice a few of the eminent sources from which Mr. Irving has drawn his account of the "Conquest of Granada." The first of these is the Epistles of Peter Martyr, an Italian *savant*, who, having passed over with the Spanish ambassador into Spain, and being introduced into the court of Isabella, was employed by her in some important embassies. He was personally present at several campaigns of this war. In his "Letters" he occasionally smiles at the caprice which

had led him to exchange the pen for the sword, while his speculations on the events passing before him, being those of a scholar rather than of a soldier, afford in their moral complexion a pleasing contrast to the dreary details of blood and battle. Another authority is the Chronicle of Bernaldez, a worthy ecclesiastic of that period, whose bulky manuscript, like that of many a better writer, lies still engulfed in the dust of some Spanish library, having never been admitted to the honors of the press.* Copies of it, however, are freely circulated. It is one of those good-natured, gossiping memorials of an antique age, abounding equally in curious and commonplace incident, told in a way sufficiently prolix, but not without considerable interest. The testimony of this writer is of particular value, moreover, on this occasion, from the proximity of his residence in Andalusia to those scenes which were the seat of the war. His style overflows with that religious loyalty with which Mr. Irving has liberally seasoned the effusions of Fra Antonio Agapida. Hernando del Pulgar, another contemporary historian, was the secretary and counsellor of their Catholic majesties, and appointed by them to the post of national chronicler, an office familiar both to the courts of Castile and Aragon, in which latter country, especially, it has been occupied by some of its most distinguished historians. Pulgar's long residence at court, his practical acquaintance with affairs, and, above all, the access which he ob-

* An edition of this Chronicle was published in Granada in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century.—M.

tained, by means of his official station, to the best sources of information, have enabled him to make his work a rich repository of facts relating to the general resources of government, the policy of its administration, and, more particularly, the conduct of the military operations in the closing war of Granada, of which he was himself an eye-witness. In addition to these writers, this period has been illumined by the labors of the most celebrated historians of Castile and Aragon, Mariana and Zurita, both of whom conclude their narratives with it, the last expanding the biography of Ferdinand alone into two volumes folio. Besides these, Mr. Irving has derived collateral lights from many sources of inferior celebrity but not less unsuspicious credit. So that, in conclusion, notwithstanding a certain dramatic coloring which Fra Agapida's "Chronicle" occasionally wears, and notwithstanding the romantic forms of a style which, to borrow the language of Cicero, seems "to flow, as it were, from the very lips of the Muses," we may honestly recommend it as substantially an authentic record of one of the most interesting and, as far as English scholars are concerned, one of the most untravelled portions of Spanish history.

CERVANTES *

(July, 1837)

THE publication, in this country, of an important Spanish classic in the original, with a valuable commentary, is an event of some moment in our literary annals, and indicates a familiarity, rapidly increasing, with the beautiful literature to which it belongs. It may be received as an omen favorable to the cause of modern literature in general, the study of which, in all its varieties, may be urged on substantially the same grounds. The growing importance attached to this branch of education is visible in other countries quite as much as in our own. It is the natural, or, rather, necessary result of the changes which have taken place in the social relations of man in this revolutionary age. Formerly a nation, pent up within its own barriers, knew less of its neighbors than we now know of what is going on in Siam or Japan. A river, a chain of mountains, an imaginary line, even, parted them as far asunder as if oceans had rolled between. To speak correctly, it was their imperfect civilization, their

* "*El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, compuesto por Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Nueva Edicion clásica, ilustrada con Notas históricas, gramaticales y críticas, por la Academia Española, sus Individuos de Número Pellicer, Arrieta, y Clemencin. Enmendada y corregida por Francisco Sales, A.M., Instructor de Frances y Español en la Universidad de Harvard, en Cambrigia, Estado de Massachusetts, Norte América," 2 vols. 12mo, Boston, 1836.

ignorance of the means and the subjects of communication, which thus kept them asunder. Now, on the contrary, a change in the domestic institutions of one country can hardly be effected without a corresponding agitation in those of its neighbors. A treaty of alliance can scarcely be adjusted without the intervention of a general Congress. The sword cannot be unsheathed in one part of Christendom without thousands leaping from their scabbards in every other. The whole system is bound together by as nice sympathies as if animated by a common pulse, and the remotest countries of Europe are brought into contiguity as intimate as were in ancient times the provinces of a single monarchy.

This intimate association has been prodigiously increased of late years by the unprecedented discoveries which science has made for facilitating intercommunication. The inhabitants of Great Britain, that "ultima Thule" of the ancients, can now run down to the extremity of Italy in less time than it took Horace to go from Rome to Brundusium. A steamboat of fashionable tourists will touch at all the places of note in the Iliad and Odyssey in fewer weeks than it would have cost years to an ancient Argonaut or a crusader of the Middle Ages. Every one, of course, travels, and almost every capital and noted watering-place on the Continent swarms with its thousands, and Paris with its tens of thousands, of itinerant cockneys, many of whom, perhaps, have not wandered beyond the sound of Bow-bells in their own little island.

DON QUIXOTE.

Few of these adventurers are so dull as not to be quickened into something like curiosity respecting the language and institutions of the strange people among whom they are thrown, while the better sort and more intelligent are led to study more carefully the new forms, whether in arts or letters, under which human genius is unveiled to them.

The effect of all this is especially visible in the reforms introduced into the modern systems of education. In both the universities recently established in London, the apparatus for instruction, instead of being limited to the ancient tongues, is extended to the whole circle of modern literature; and the editorial labors of many of the professors show that they do not sleep on their posts. Periodicals, under the management of the ablest writers, furnish valuable contributions of foreign criticism and intelligence; and regular histories of the various Continental literatures, a department in which the English are singularly barren, are understood to be now in actual preparation.

But, although barren of literary, the English have made important contributions to the political history of the Continental nations. That of Spain has employed some of their best writers, who, it must be admitted, however, have confined themselves so far to the foreign relations of the country as to have left the domestic in comparative obscurity. Thus, Robertson's great work is quite as much the history of Europe as of Spain under Charles the Fifth; and Watson's "Reign of Philip the Second" might with equal propriety be

styled "The War of the Netherlands," which is its principal burden.

A few works recently published in the United States have shed far more light on the interior organization and intellectual culture of the Spanish nation. Such, for example, are the writings of Irving, whose gorgeous coloring reflects so clearly the chivalrous splendors of the fifteenth century, and the travels of Lieutenant Slidell, presenting sketches equally animated of the social aspect of that most picturesque of all lands in the present century. In Mr. Cushing's "Reminiscences of Spain" we find, mingled with much characteristic fiction, some very laborious inquiries into curious and recondite points of history. In the purely literary department, * Mr. Ticknor's beautiful lectures before the classes of Harvard University, still in manuscript, embrace a far more extensive range of criticism than is to be found in any Spanish work, and display, at the same time, a degree of thoroughness and research which the comparative paucity of materials will compel us to look for in vain in Bouterwek or Sismondi. Mr. Ticknor's successor, Professor Longfellow, favorably known by other compositions, has enriched our language with a noble version of the "Coplas de Manrique," the finest gem, beyond all comparison, in the Castilian verse of the fifteenth century. We have also read with pleasure a clever translation of Quevedo's "Visions," no very easy achievement, by Mr. Elliot, of Philadelphia; though the trans-

* Ticknor's History of Spanish Literature was published in 1849. See the last review in Vol. II. of the Miscellanies.—M.

lator is wrong in supposing his the first English version. The first is as old as Queen Anne's time, and was made by the famous Sir Roger L'Estrange. To close the account, Mr. Sales, the venerable instructor in Harvard College, has now given, for the first time in the New World, an elaborate edition of the prince of Castilian classics, in a form which may claim, to a certain extent, the merit of originality.

We shall postpone the few remarks we have to make on this edition to the close of our article; and in the mean time we propose, not to give the life of Cervantes, but to notice such points as are least familiar in his literary history, and especially in regard to the composition and publication of his great work, the Don Quixote; a work which, from its wide and long-established popularity, may be said to constitute part of the literature not merely of Spain, but of every country in Europe.

The age of Cervantes was that of Philip the Second, when the Spanish monarchy, declining somewhat from its palmy state, was still making extraordinary efforts to maintain, and even to extend, its already overgrown empire. Its navies were on every sea, and its armies in every quarter of the Old World and in the New. Arms was the only profession worthy of a gentleman; and there was scarcely a writer of any eminence—certainly no bard—of the age, who, if he were not in orders, had not borne arms, at some period, in the service of his country. Cervantes, who, though poor, was born of an ancient family (it must go hard with a Castilian who cannot make out a pedigree for him-

self), had a full measure of this chivalrous spirit, and during the first half of his life we find him in the midst of all the stormy and disastrous scenes of the iron trade of war. His love of the military profession, even after the loss of his hand, or of the use of it, for it is uncertain which, is sufficient proof of his adventurous spirit. In the course of his checkered career he visited the principal countries in the Mediterranean, and passed five years in melancholy captivity at Algiers. The time was not lost, however, which furnished his keen eye with those glowing pictures of Moslem luxury and magnificence with which he has enriched his pages. After a life of unprecedented hardship, he returned to his own country, covered with laurels and scars, with very little money in his pocket, but with plenty of that experience which, regarding him as a novelist, might be considered his stock in trade.

The poet may draw from the depths of his own fancy; the scholar, from his library; but the proper study of the dramatic writer, whether in verse or in prose, is man,—man as he exists in society. He who would faithfully depict human character cannot study it too nearly and variously. He must sit down, like Scott, by the fireside of the peasant and listen to the "auld wife's" tale; he must preside, with Fielding, at a petty justice sessions, or share with some Squire Western in the glorious hazards of a fox-hunt; he must, like Smollett and Cooper, study the mysteries of the deep, and mingle on the stormy element itself with the singular beings whose destinies he is to describe;

or, like Cervantes, he must wander among other races and in other climes, before his pencil can give those chameleon touches which reflect the shifting, many-colored hues of actual life. He may, indeed, like Rousseau, if it were possible to imagine another Rousseau, turn his thoughts inward, and draw from the depths of his own soul; but he would see there only his own individual passions and prejudices, and the portraits he might sketch, however various in subordinate details, would be, in their characteristic features, only the reproduction of himself. He might, in short, be a poet, a philosopher, but not a painter of life and manners.

Cervantes had ample means for pursuing the study of human character, after his return to Spain, in the active life which engaged him in various parts of the country. In Andalusia he might have found the models of the sprightly wit and delicate irony with which he has seasoned his fictions; in Seville, in particular, he was brought in contact with the fry of small sharpers and pickpockets who make so respectable a figure in his *picaresco* novels; and in La Mancha he not only found the geography of his Don Quixote, but that whimsical contrast of pride and poverty in the natives, which has furnished the outlines of many a broad caricature to the comic writers of Spain.

During all this while he had made himself known only by his pastoral fiction, the "Galatea," a beautiful specimen of an insipid class, which, with all its literary merits, afforded no scope for the power of depicting human character, which he possessed, perhaps, unknown to himself. He

wrote, also, a good number of plays, all of which, except two, and these recovered only at the close of the last century, have perished. One of these, "The Siege of Numantia," displays that truth of drawing and strength of color which mark the consummate artist. It was not until he had reached his fifty-seventh year that he completed the First Part of his great work, the Don Quixote. The most celebrated novels, unlike most works of imagination, seem to have been the production of the later period of life. Fielding was between forty and fifty when he wrote "Tom Jones;" Richardson was sixty, or very near it, when he wrote "Clarissa;" and Scott was some years over forty when he began the series of the Waverley novels. The world, the school of the novelist, cannot be run through like the terms of a university, and the knowledge of its manifold varieties must be the result of long and diligent training.

The First Part of the Quixote was begun, as the author tells us, in a prison, to which he had been brought, not by crime or debt, but by some offence, probably, to the worthy people of La Mancha. It is not the only work of genius which has struggled into being in such unfavorable quarters. The "Pilgrim's Progress," the most popular, probably, of English fictions, was composed under similar circumstances. But we doubt if such brilliant fancies and such flashes of humor ever lighted up the walls of the prison-house before the time of Cervantes.

The First Part of the Don Quixote was given to the public in 1605. Cervantes, when the time

arrived for launching his satire against the old, deep-rooted prejudices of his countrymen, probably regarded it, as well he might, as little less rash than his own hero's tilt against the windmills. He sought, accordingly, to shield himself under the cover of a powerful name, and asked leave to dedicate the book to a Castilian grandee, the Duke de Bejar. The duke, it is said, whether ignorant of the design or doubting the success of the work, would have declined, but Cervantes urged him first to peruse a single chapter. The audience summoned to sit in judgment were so delighted with the first pages that they would not abandon the novel till they had heard the whole of it. The duke, of course, without farther hesitation, condescended to allow his name to be inserted in this passport to immortality.

There is nothing very improbable in the story. It reminds one of a similar experiment by St. Pierre, who submitted his manuscript of "Paul and Virginia" to a circle of French *littérateurs*, Monsieur and Madame Necker, the Abbé Galiani, Thomas, Buffon, and some others, all wits of the first water in the metropolis. Hear the result, in the words of his biographer, or, rather, his agreeable translator: "At first the author was heard in silence; by degrees the attention grew languid; they began to whisper, to gape, and listened no longer. M. de Buffon looked at his watch, and called for his horses; those near the door slipped out; Thomas went to sleep; M. Necker laughed to see the ladies weep; and the ladies, ashamed of their tears, did not dare to confess that they had

been interested. The reading being finished, nothing was praised. Madame Necker alone criticised the conversation of Paul and the old man. This *moral* appeared to her tedious and commonplace: it broke the action, chilled the reader, and was a sort of *glass of iced water*. M. de St. Pierre retired in a state of indescribable depression. He regarded what had passed as his sentence of death. The effect of his work on an audience like that to which he had read it left him no hope for the future." Yet this work was "Paul and Virginia," one of the most popular books in the French language. So much for criticism!

The truth seems to be, that the judgment of no private circle, however well qualified by taste and talent, can afford a sure prognostic of that of the great public. If the manuscript to be criticised is our friend's, of course the verdict is made up before perusal. If some great man modestly sues for our approbation, our self-complacency has been too much flattered for us to withhold it. If it be a little man (and St. Pierre was but a little man at that time), our prejudices—the prejudices of poor human nature—will be very apt to take an opposite direction. Be the cause what it may, whoever rests his hopes of public favor on the smiles of a *coterie* runs the risk of finding himself very unpleasantly deceived. Many a trim bark which has flaunted gayly in a summer lake has gone to pieces amid the billows and breakers of the rude ocean.

The prognostic in the case of Cervantes, however, proved more correct. His work produced an instantaneous effect on the community. He had

struck a note which found an echo in every bosom. Four editions were published in the course of the first year,—two in Madrid, one in Valencia, and another at Lisbon.

This success, almost unexampled in any age, was still more extraordinary in one in which the reading public was comparatively limited. That the book found its way speedily into the very highest circles in the kingdom is evident from the well-known explanation of Philip the Third when he saw a student laughing immoderately over some volume: "The man must be either out of his wits, or reading Don Quixote." Notwithstanding, its author felt none of that sunshine of royal favor which would have been so grateful in his necessities.

The period was that of the golden prime of Castilian literature. But the monarch on the throne, one of the ill-starred dynasty of Austria, would have been better suited to the darkest of the Middle Ages. His hours, divided between his devotions and his debaucheries, left nothing to spare for letters; and his minister, the arrogant Duke of Lerma, was too much absorbed by his own selfish though shallow schemes of policy to trouble himself with romance-writers, or their satirist. Cervantes, however, had entered on a career which, as he intimates in some of his verses, might lead to fame, but not to fortune. Happily, he did not compromise his fame by precipitating the execution of his works from motives of temporary profit. It was not till several years after the publication of the Don Quixote that he gave to the

world his Exemplary Novels, as he called them,—fictions which, differing from any thing before known, not only in the Castilian, but, in some respects, in any other literature, gave ample scope to his dramatic talent, in the contrivance of situations and the nice delineation of character. These works, whose diction was uncommonly rich and attractive, were popular from the first. One cannot but be led to inquire why, with such success as an author, he continued to be so straitened in his circumstances, as he plainly intimates was the case more than once in his writings. From the Don Quixote, notwithstanding its great run, he probably received little, since he had parted with the entire copyright before publication, when the work was regarded as an experiment the result of which was quite doubtful. It is not so easy to explain the difficulty when his success as an author had been so completely established. Cervantes intimates his dissatisfaction, in more than one place in his writings, with the booksellers themselves. "What, sir!" replies an author introduced into his Don Quixote, "would you have me sell the profit of my labor to a bookseller for three maravedis a sheet? for that is the most they will bid, nay, and expect, too, I should thank them for the offer." This burden of lamentation, the alleged illiberality of the publisher towards the poor author, is as old as the art of book-making itself. But the public receive the account from the party aggrieved only. If the bookseller reported his own case, we should, no doubt, have a different version. If Cervantes was in the right, the trade in Castile showed a de-

gree of dexterity in their proceedings which richly entitled them to the pillory. In one of his tales we find a certain licentiate complaining of "the tricks and deceptions they put upon an author when they buy a copyright from him; and still more, the manner in which they cheat him if he prints the book at his own charges; since nothing is more common than for them to agree for fifteen hundred, and have privily, perhaps, as many as three thousand thrown off, one-half, at the least, of which they sell, not for his profit, but their own."

The writings of Cervantes appear to have gained him, however, two substantial friends in Cabra, the Count of Lemos, and the Archbishop of Toledo, of the ancient family of Rojas; and the patronage of these illustrious individuals has been nobly recompensed by having their names forever associated with the imperishable productions of genius.

There was still one kind of patronage wanting in this early age, that of a great, enlightened community,—the only patronage which can be received without some sense of degradation by a generous mind. There was, indeed, one golden channel of public favor, and that was the theatre. The drama has usually flourished most at the period when a nation is beginning to taste the sweets of literary culture. Such was the early part of the seventeenth century in Europe; the age of Shakspeare, Johnson, and Fletcher in England; of Ariosto, Machiavelli, and the wits who first successfully wooed the comic muse of

Italy; of the great Corneille, some years later, in France; and of that miracle, or, rather, "monster of nature," as Cervantes styled him, Lope de Vega in Spain. Theatrical exhibitions are a combination of the material with the intellectual, at which the ordinary spectator derives less pleasure, probably, from the beautiful creations of the poet than from the scenic decorations, music, and other accessories which address themselves to the senses. The fondness for *spectacle* is characteristic of an early period of society, and the theatre is the most brilliant of pageants. With the progress of education and refinement, men become less open to, or, at least, less dependent on, the pleasures of sense, and seek their enjoyment in more elevated and purer sources. Thus it is that, instead of

> "Sweating in the crowded theatre, squeezed
> And bored with elbow-points through both our sides,"

as the sad minstrel of nature sings, we sit quietly at home, enjoying the pleasures of fiction around our own firesides, and the poem or the novel takes the place of the acted drama. The decline of dramatic writing may justly be lamented as that of one of the most beautiful varieties in the garden of literature. But it must be admitted to be both a symptom and a necessary consequence of the advance of civilization.

The popularity of the stage, at the period of which we are speaking, in Spain, was greatly augmented by the personal influence and reputation of Lope de Vega, the idol of his countrymen, who threw off the various inventions of his genius with

a rapidity and profusion that almost staggers credibility. It is impossible to state the results of his labors in any form that will not powerfully strike the imagination. Thus, he has left twenty-one million three hundred thousand verses in print, besides a mass of manuscript. He furnished the theatre, according to the statement of his intimate friend Montalvan, with eighteen hundred regular plays, and four hundred *autos* of religious dramas, —all acted. He composed, according to his own statement, more than one hundred comedies in the almost incredible space of twenty-four hours each, and a comedy averaged between two and three thousand verses, a great part of them rhymed and interspersed with sonnets and other more difficult forms of versification. He lived seventy-two years; and supposing him to have employed fifty of that period in composition, although he filled a variety of engrossing vocations during that time, he must have averaged a play a week, to say nothing of twenty-one volumes quarto of miscellaneous works, including five epics, written in his leisure moments, and all now in print!

The only achievements we can recall in literary history bearing any resemblance to, though falling far short of this, are those of our illustrious contemporary Sir Walter Scott. The complete edition of his works, recently advertised by Murray, with the addition of two volumes of which Murray has not the copyright, probably contains ninety volumes small octavo. To these should farther be added a large supply of matter for the Edinburgh Annual Register, as well as other anonymous con-

tributions. Of these, forty-eight volumes of novels and twenty-one of history and biography were produced between 1814 and 1831, or in seventeen years. These would give an average of four volumes a year, or one for every three months during the whole of that period, to which must be added twenty-one volumes of poetry and prose previously published. The mere mechanical execution of so much work, both in his case and Lope de Vega's, would seem to be scarce possible in the limits assigned. Scott, too, was as variously occupied in other ways as his Spanish rival, and probably, from the social hospitality of his life, spent a much larger portion of his time in no literary occupation at all.

Notwithstanding we have amused ourselves, at the expense of the reader's patience perhaps, with these calculations, this certainly is not the standard by which we should recommend to estimate works of genius. Wit is not to be measured, like broadcloth, by the yard. Easy writing, as the adage says, and as we all know, is apt to be very hard reading. This brings to our recollection a conversation, in the presence of Captain Basil Hall, in which, some allusion having been made to the astonishing amount of Scott's daily composition, the literary argonaut remarked, "There was nothing astonishing in all that, and that he did as much himself nearly every day before breakfast." Some one of the company unkindly asked "whether he thought the *quality* was the same." It is the quality, undoubtedly, which makes the difference. And in this view Lope de Vega's

miracles lose much of their effect. Of all his multitudinous dramas, one or two only retain possession of the stage, and few, very few, are now even read. His facility of composition was like that of an Italian improvisatore, whose fertile fancy easily clothes itself in verse, in language the vowel terminations of which afford such a plenitude of rhymes. The Castilian presents even greater facilities for this than the Italian. Lope de Vega was an improvisatore.

With all his negligences and defects, however, Lope's interesting intrigues, easy, sprightly dialogue, infinite variety of inventions, and the breathless rapidity with which they followed one another, so dazzled and bewildered the imagination that he completely controlled the public, and became, in the words of Cervantes, " sole monarch of the stage." The public repaid him with such substantial gratitude as has never been shown, probably, to any other of its favorites. His fortune at one time, although he was careless of his expenses, amounted to one hundred thousand ducats, equal, probably, to between seven and eight hundred thousand dollars of the present day. In the same street in which dwelt this spoiled child of fortune, who, amid the caresses of the great and the lavish smiles of the public, could complain that his merits were neglected, lived Cervantes, struggling under adversity, or at least earning a painful subsistence by the labors of his immortal pen. What a contrast do these pictures present to the imagination! If the suffrages of a *coterie*, as we have said, afford no warrant for those of the pub-

lic, the example before us proves that the award of one's contemporaries is quite as likely to be set aside by posterity. Lope de Vega, who gave his name to his age, has now fallen into neglect even among his countrymen, while the fame of Cervantes, gathering strength with time, has become the pride of his own nation, as his works still continue to be the delight of the whole civilized world.

However stinted may have been the recompense of his deserts at home, it is gratifying to observe how widely his fame was diffused in his own lifetime, and that in foreign countries, at least, he enjoyed the full consideration to which he was entitled. An interesting anecdote illustrating this is recorded, which, as we have never seen it in English, we will lay before the reader. On occasion of a visit made by the Archbishop of Toledo to the French ambassador resident at Madrid, the prelate's suite fell into conversation with the attendants of the minister, in the course of which Cervantes was mentioned. The French gentlemen expressed their unqualified admiration of his writings, specifying the Galatea, Don Quixote, and the Novels, which, they said, were read in all the countries round, and in France particularly, where there were some who might be said to know them actually by heart. They intimated their desire to become personally acquainted with so eminent a man, and asked many questions respecting his present occupations, his circumstances, and way of life. To all this the Castilians could only reply that he had borne arms in the service of his country, and was now old and poor. "What!"

exclaimed one of the strangers, "is Señor Cervantes not in good circumstances? Why is he not maintained, then, out of the public treasury?" "Heaven forbid," rejoined another, "that his necessities should be ever relieved, if it is these which make him write, since it is his poverty that makes the world rich."

There are other evidences, though not of so pleasing a character, of the eminence which he had reached at home, in the jealousy and ill will of his brother poets. The Castilian poets of that day seem to have possessed a full measure of that irritability which has been laid at the door of all their tribe since the days of Horace; and the freedom of Cervantes's literary criticisms in his Don Quixote and other writings, though never personal in their character, brought down on his head a storm of arrows, some of which, if not sent with much force, were at least well steeped in venom. Lope de Vega is even said to have appeared among the assailants, and a sonnet, still preserved, is currently imputed to him, in which, after much eulogy on himself, he predicts that the works of his rival will find their way into the kennel. But the author of this bad prophecy and worse poetry could never have been the great Lope, who showed on all occasions a generous spirit, and whose literary success must have made such an assault unnecessary and in the highest degree unmanly. On the contrary, we have evidence of a very different feeling, in the homage which he renders to the merits of his illustrious contemporary in more than one passage of his acknowledged works, especially

in his "Laurel de Apolo," in which he concludes his poetical panegyric with the following touching conceit:

"Porque se diga que una mano herida
Pudo dar á su dueño eterna vida."

This poem was published by Lope in 1630, fourteen years after the death of his rival; notwithstanding, Mr. Lockhart informs his readers, in his biographical preface to the Don Quixote, that "as Lope de Vega was dead (1615), there was no one to divide with Cervantes the literary empire of his country."

In the dedication of his ill-fated comedies, 1615 (for Cervantes, like most other celebrated novelists, found it difficult to concentrate his expansive vein within the compass of dramatic rules), the public was informed that "Don Quixote was already booted" and preparing for another sally. It may seem strange that the author, considering the great popularity of his hero, had not sent him on his adventures before. But he had probably regarded them as already terminated; and he had good reason to do so, since every incident in the First Part, as it has been styled only since the publication of the Second, is complete in itself, and the Don, although not actually killed on the stage, is noticed as dead, and his epitaph transcribed for the reader. However this may be, the immediate execution of his purpose, so long delayed, was precipitated by an event equally unwelcome and unexpected. This was the continuation of his work by another hand.

The author's name, his *nom de guerre*, was

Avellaneda, a native of Tordesillas. Adopting the original idea of Cervantes, he goes forward with the same characters, through similar scenes of comic extravagance, in the course of which he perpetrates sundry plagiarisms from the First Part, and has some incidents so much resembling those in the Second Part, already written by Cervantes, that it has been supposed he must have had access to his manuscript. It is more probable, as the resemblance is but general, that he obtained his knowledge through hints which may have fallen in conversation from Cervantes in the progress of his own work. The spurious continuation had some little merit, and attracted, probably, some interest, as any work conducted under so popular a name could not have failed to do. It was, however, on the whole, a vulgar performance, thickly sprinkled with such gross scurrility and indecency as was too strong even for the palate of that not very fastidious age. The public feeling may be gathered from the fact that the author did not dare to depart from his incognito and claim the honors of a triumph. The most diligent inquiries have established nothing farther than that he was an Aragonese, judging from his diction, and, from the complexion of certain passages in the work, probably an ecclesiastic, and one of the swarm of small dramatists who felt themselves rudely handled by the criticism of Cervantes. The work was subsequently translated, or rather paraphrased, by Le Sage, who has more than once given a substantial value to gems of little price in Castilian literature by the brilliancy of his setting.

The original work of Avellaneda, always deriving an interest from the circumstances of its production, has been reprinted in the present century, and is not difficult to be met with. To have thus coolly invaded an author's own property, to have filched from him the splendid though unfinished creations of his genius before his own face, and while, as was publicly known, he was in the very process of completing them, must be admitted to be an act of unblushing effrontery not surpassed in the annals of literature.

Cervantes was much annoyed, it appears, by the circumstance. The continuation of Avellaneda reached him, probably, when on the fifty-ninth chapter of the Second Part. At least, from that time he begins to discharge his gall on the head of the offender, who, it should be added, had consummated his impudence by sneering, in his introduction, at the qualifications of Cervantes. The best retort of the latter, however, was the publication of his own book, which followed at the close of 1615.

The English novelist Richardson experienced a treatment not unlike that of the Castilian. His popular story of Pamela was continued by another and very inferior hand, under the title of "Pamela in High Life." The circumstance prompted Richardson to undertake the continuation himself; and it turned out, like most others, a decided failure. Indeed, a skilful continuation seems to be the most difficult work of art. The first effort of the author breaks, as it were, unexpectedly on the public, taking their judgment by surprise, and by

its very success creating a standard by which the author himself is subsequently to be tried. Before, he was compared with others; he is now to be compared with himself. The public expectation has been raised. A degree of excellence which might have found favor at first will now scarcely be tolerated. It will not even suffice for him to maintain his own level. He must rise above himself. The reader, in the mean while, has naturally filled up the blank, and insensibly conducted the characters and the story to a termination in his own way. As the reality seldom keeps pace with the ideal, the author's execution will hardly come up to the imagination of his readers; at any rate, it will differ from them, and so far be displeasing. We experience something of this disappointment in the dramas borrowed from popular novels, where the development of the characters by the dramatic author, and the new direction given to the original story in his hands, rarely fail to offend the taste and preconceived ideas of the spectator. To feel the force of this, it is only necessary to see the Guy Mannering, Rob Roy, and other plays dramatized from the Waverley novels.

Some part of the failure of such continuations is, no doubt, fairly chargeable, in most instances, on the author himself, who goes to his new task with little of his primitive buoyancy and vigor. He no longer feels the same interest in his own labors, which, losing their freshness, have become as familiar to his imagination as a thrice-told tale. The new composition has, of course, a different complexion from the former, cold, stiff, and dis-

jointed, like a bronze statue whose parts have been separately put together, instead of being cast in one mould when the whole metal was in a state of fusion.

The continuation of Cervantes forms a splendid exception to the general rule. The popularity of his First Part had drawn forth abundance of criticism, and he availed himself of it to correct some material blemishes in the design of the Second, while an assiduous culture of the Castilian enabled him to enrich his style with greater variety and beauty.

He had now reached the zenith of his fame, and the profits of his continuation may have relieved the pecuniary embarrassments under which he had struggled. But he was not long to enjoy his triumph. Before his death, which took place in the following year, he completed his romance of "Persiles and Sigismunda," the dedication to which, written a few days before his death, is strongly characteristic of its writer. It is addressed to his old patron, the Conde de Lemos, then absent from the country. After saying, in the words of the old Spanish proverb, that he had "*one foot in the stirrup,*" in allusion to the distant journey on which he was soon to set out, he adds, "Yesterday I received the extreme unction; but, now that the shadows of death are closing around me, I still cling to life, from the love of it, as well as from the desire to behold you again. But if it is decreed otherwise (and the will of Heaven be done), your excellency will at least feel assured there was one person whose wish to serve

you was greater than the love of life itself." After these reminiscences of his benefactor, he expresses his own purpose, should life be spared, to complete several works he had already begun. Such were the last words of this illustrious man; breathing the same generous sensibility, the same ardent love of letters and beautiful serenity of temper which distinguished him through life. He died a few days after, on the 23d of April, 1616. His remains were laid, without funeral pomp, in the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Madrid.* No memorial points out the spot to the eye of the traveller, nor is it known at this day. And, while many a costly construction has been piled on the ashes of the little great, to the shame of Spain be it spoken, no monument has yet been erected in honor of the greatest genius she has produced. He has built, however, a monument for himself more durable than brass or sculptured marble.

Don Quixote is too familiar to the reader to require any analysis; but we will enlarge on a few circumstances attending its composition but little known to the English scholar, which may enable him to form a better judgment for himself. The age of chivalry, as depicted in romances, could never, of course, have had any real existence; but the sentiments which are described as animating that age have been found more or

* He was buried in the Convent of the Nuns of the Trinity.—Ticknor's Spanish Literature, II. p. 132. Of this community his daughter Isabel was a professed member. When in 1633 the nuns moved to a new site, his bones were cast into a common ossuary, and so lost. A bronze statue of Cervantes, the work of Antonio Sola, stands in the Plaza de las Cortes, in Madrid.—M.

less operative in different countries and different periods of society. In Spain, especially, this influence is to be discerned from a very early date. Its inhabitants may be said to have lived in a romantic atmosphere, in which all the extravagances of chivalry were nourished by their peculiar situation. Their hostile relations with the Moslem kept alive the full glow of religious and patriotic feeling. Their history is one interminable crusade. An enemy always on the borders invited perpetual displays of personal daring and adventure. The refinement and magnificence of the Spanish Arabs throw a lustre over these contests such as could not be reflected from the rude skirmishes with their Christian neighbors. Lofty sentiments, embellished by the softer refinements of courtesy, were blended in the martial bosom of the Spaniard, and Spain became emphatically the land of romantic chivalry.

The very laws themselves, conceived in this spirit, contributed greatly to foster it. The ancient code of Alfonso the Tenth, in the thirteenth century, after many minute regulations for the deportment of the good knight, enjoins on him to "invoke the name of his mistress in the fight, that it may infuse new ardor into his soul and preserve him from the commission of unknightly actions." Such laws were not a dead letter. The history of Spain shows that the sentiment of romantic gallantry penetrated the nation more deeply and continued longer than in any other quarter of Christendom.

Foreign chroniclers, as well as domestic, of the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, notice the frequent appearance of Spanish knights in different courts of Europe, whither they had travelled, in the language of an old writer, "to seek honor and reverence" by their feats of arms. In the Paston Letters,* written in the time of Henry the Sixth of England, we find a notice of a Castilian knight who presented himself before the court, and, with his mistress's favor around his arm, challenged the English cavaliers "to run a course of sharp spears with him for his sovereign lady's sake." Pulgar, a Spanish chronicler of the close of the sixteenth century, speaks of this roving knight-errantry as a thing of familiar occurrence among the young cavaliers of his day; and Oviedo, who lived somewhat later, notices the necessity under which every true knight found himself of being in love, or *feigning to be so*, in order to give a suitable lustre and incentive to his achievements. But the most singular proof of the extravagant pitch to which these romantic feelings were carried in Spain occurs in the account of the jousts appended to the fine old chronicle of Alvaro de Luna, published by the Academy in 1784. The principal champion was named Sueño de Quenones, who, with nine companions in arms, defended a pass at Orbigo, not far from the shrine of Compostella, against all comers, in the presence of King John the Second and his court. The object of this passage of arms, as it was called,

* The Paston Letters, written during the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III., are invaluable for the light they throw upon the social conditions of England in the fifteenth century. —M.

was to release the knight from the obligation imposed on him by his mistress of publicly wearing an iron collar round his neck every Thursday. The jousts continued for thirty days, and the doughty champions fought without shield or target, with weapons bearing points of Milan steel. Six hundred and twenty-seven encounters took place, and one hundred and sixty-six lances were broken when the emprise was declared to be fairly achieved. The whole affair is narrated, with becoming gravity, by an eye-witness, and the reader may fancy himself perusing the adventures of a Launcelot or an Amadis. The particulars of this tourney are detailed at length in Mills's Chivalry (vol. ii. chap. v.), where, however, the author has defrauded the successful champions of their full honors by incorrectly reporting the number of lances broken as only sixty-six.

The taste for these romantic extravagances naturally fostered a corresponding taste for the perusal of tales of chivalry. Indeed, they acted reciprocally on each other. These chimerical legends had once, also, beguiled the long evenings of our Norman ancestors, but, in the progress of civilization, had gradually given way to other and more natural forms of composition. They still maintained their ground in Italy, whither they had passed later, and where they were consecrated by the hand of genius. But Italy was not the true soil of chivalry, and the inimitable fictions of Bojardo, Pulci, and Ariosto were composed with that lurking smile of half-suppressed mirth which,

far from a serious tone, could raise only a corresponding smile of incredulity in the reader.

In Spain, however, the marvels of romance were all taken in perfect good faith. Not that they were received as literally true; but the reader surrendered himself up to the illusion, and was moved to admiration by the recital of deeds which, viewed in any other light than as a wild frolic of imagination, would be supremely ridiculous; for these tales had not the merit of a seductive style and melodious versification to relieve them. They were, for the most part, an ill-digested mass of incongruities, in which there was as little keeping and probability in the characters as in the incidents, while the whole was told in that stilted "Hercles' vein" and with that licentiousness of allusion and imagery which could not fail to debauch both the taste and the morals of the youthful reader. The mind, familiarized with these monstrous, over-colored pictures, lost all relish for the chaste and sober productions of art. The love of the gigantic and the marvellous indisposed the reader for the simple delineations of truth in real history. The feelings expressed by a sensible Spaniard of the sixteenth century, the anonymous author of the "Diálogo de las Lenguas," probably represent those of many of his contemporaries. "Ten of the best years of my life," says he, "were spent no more profitably than in devouring these lies, which I did even while eating my meals; and the consequence of this depraved appetite was, that if I took in hand any true book of history, or

one that passed for such, I was unable to wade through it."

The influence of this meretricious taste was nearly as fatal on the historian himself as on his readers, since he felt compelled to minister to the public appetite such a mixture of the marvellous in all his narrations as materially discredited the veracity of his writings. Every hero became a demigod, who put the labors of Hercules to shame; and every monk or old hermit was converted into a saint, who wrought more miracles, before and after death, than would have sufficed to canonize a monastery. The fabulous ages of Greece are scarcely more fabulous than the close of the Middle Ages in Spanish history, which compares very discreditably, in this particular, with similar periods in most European countries. The confusion of fact and fiction continues to a very late age; and as one gropes his way through the twilight of tradition he is at a loss whether the dim objects are men or shadows. The most splendid names in Castilian annals—names incorporated with the glorious achievements of the land, and embalmed alike in the page of the chronicler and the song of the minstrel—names associated with the most stirring, patriotic recollections—are now found to have been the mere coinage of fancy. There seems to be no more reason for believing in the real existence of Bernardo del Carpio, of whom so much has been said and sung, than in that of Charlemagne's paladins, or of the Knights of the Round Table. Even the Cid, the national hero of Spain, is contended, by some of the shrewdest

native critics of our own times, to be an imaginary being; and it is certain that the splendid fabric of his exploits, familiar as household words to every Spaniard, has crumbled to pieces under the rude touch of modern criticism. These heroes, it is true, flourished before the introduction of romances of chivalry; but the legends of their prowess have been multiplied beyond bounds, in consequence of the taste created by these romances, and an easy faith accorded to them at the same time, such as would never have been conceded in any other civilized nation. In short, the elements of truth and falsehood beeame so blended that history was converted into romance, and romance received the credit due only to history.

These mischievous consequences drew down the animadversions of thinking men, and at length provoked the interference of government itself. In 1543, Charles the Fifth, by an edict, prohibited books of chivalry from being imported into his American colonies, or being printed or even read there. The legislation for America proceeded from the crown alone, which had always regarded the New World as its own exclusive property. In 1555, however, the Cortes of the kingdom presented a *petition* (which requires only the royal signature to become at once the law), setting forth the manifold evils resulting from these romances. There is an air at once both of simplicity and solemnity in the language of this instrument which may amuse the reader: "Moreover, we say that it is very notorious what mischief has been done to young men and maidens, and other per-

sons, by the perusal of books full of lies and vanities, like Amadis, and works of that description, since young people especially, from their natural idleness, resort to this kind of reading, and, becoming enamored of passages of love or arms, or other nonsense which they find set forth therein, when situations at all analogous offer, are led to act much more extravagantly than they otherwise would have done. And many times the daughter, when her mother has locked her up safely at home, amuses herself with reading these books, which do her more hurt than she would have received from going abroad. All which redounds not only to the dishonor of individuals, but to the great detriment of conscience, by diverting the affections from holy, true, and Christian doctrine, to those wicked vanities with which the wits, as we have intimated, are completely bewildered. To remedy this, we entreat your majesty that no book treating of such matters be henceforth permitted to be read, that those now printed be collected and burned, and that none be published hereafter without special license; by which measures your majesty will render great service to God as well as to these kingdoms," etc., etc.

Notwithstanding this emphatic expression of public disapprobation, these enticing works maintained their popularity. The emperor Charles, unmindful of his own interdict, took great satisfaction in their perusal. The royal *fêtes* frequently commemorated the fabulous exploits of chivalry, and Philip the Second, then a young man, appeared in these spectacles in the character

of an adventurous knight-errant. Moratin enumerates more than seventy bulky romances, all produced in the sixteenth century, some of which passed through several editions, while many more works of the kind have, doubtless, escaped his researches. The last on his catalogue was printed in 1602, and was composed by one of the nobles at the court. Such was the state of things when Cervantes gave to the world the First Part of his Don Quixote; and it was against prejudices which had so long bade defiance to public opinion and the law itself that he now aimed the delicate shafts of his irony. It was a perilous emprise.

To effect his end, he did not produce a mere humorous travesty, like several of the Italian poets, who, having selected some well-known character in romance, make him fall into such low dialogue and such gross buffoonery as contrast most ridiculously with his assumed name; for this, though a very good jest in its way, was but a jest, and Cervantes wanted the biting edge of satire. He was, besides, too much of a poet—was too deeply penetrated with the true spirit of chivalry not to respect the noble qualities which were the basis of it. He shows this in the *auto da fé* of the Don's library, where he spares the Amadis de Gaula and some others, the best of their kind. He had once himself, as he tells us, actually commenced a serious tale of chivalry.

Cervantes brought forward a personage, therefore, in whom were embodied all those generous virtues which belong to chivalry: disinterestedness, contempt of danger, unblemished honor,

knightly courtesy, and those aspirations after ideal excellence which, if empty dreams, are the dreams of a magnanimous spirit. They are, indeed, represented by Cervantes as too ethereal for this world, and are successively dispelled as they come in contact with the coarse realities of life. It is this view of the subject which has led Sismondi, among other critics, to consider that the principal end of the author was "the ridicule of enthusiasm,—the contrast of the heroic with the vulgar,"—and he sees something profoundly sad in the conclusions to which it leads. This sort of criticism appears to be over-refined. It resembles the efforts of some commentators to allegorize the great epics of Homer and Virgil, throwing a disagreeable mistiness over the story by converting mere shadows into substances, and substances into shadows.

The great purpose of Cervantes was, doubtless, that expressly avowed by himself, namely, to correct the popular taste for romances of chivalry. It is unnecessary to look for any other in so plain a tale, although, it is true, the conduct of the story produces impressions on the reader, to a certain extent, like those suggested by Sismondi. The melancholy tendency, however, is in a great degree counteracted by the exquisitely ludicrous character of the incidents. Perhaps, after all, if we are to hunt for a moral as the key of the fiction, we may with more reason pronounce it to be the necessity of proportioning our undertakings to our capacities.

The mind of the hero, Don Quixote, is an ideal

world, into which Cervantes has poured all the rich stores of his own imagination, the poet's golden dreams, high romantic exploit, and the sweet visions of pastoral happiness; the gorgeous chimeras of the fancied age of chivalry, which had so long entranced the world; splendid illusions, which, floating before us like the airy bubbles which the child throws off from his pipe, reflect, in a thousand variegated tints, the rude objects around, until, brought into collision with these, they are dashed in pieces and melt into air. These splendid images derive tenfold beauty from the rich, antique coloring of the author's language, skilfully imitated from the old romances, but which necessarily escapes in the translation into a foreign tongue. Don Quixote's insanity operates both in mistaking the ideal for the real, and the real for the ideal. Whatever he has found in romances he believes to exist in the world; and he converts all he meets with in the world into the visions of his romances. It is difficult to say which of the two produces the most ludicrous results.

For the better exposure of these mad fancies, Cervantes has not only put them into action in real life, but contrasted them with another character which may be said to form the reverse side of his hero's. Honest Sancho represents the material principle as perfectly as his master does the intellectual or ideal. He is of the earth, earthy. Sly, selfish, sensual, his dreams are not of glory, but of good feeding. His only concern is for his carcass. His notions of honor appear to be much

the same with those of his jovial contemporary Falstaff, as conveyed in his memorable soliloquy. In the sublime night-piece which ends with the fulling-mills—truly sublime until we reach the *dénouement*—Sancho asks his master, "Why need you go about this adventure? It is main dark, and there is never a living soul sees us; we have nothing to do but to sheer off and get out of harm's way. Who is there to take notice of our flinching?" Can any thing be imagined more exquisitely opposed to the true spirit of chivalry? The whole compass of fiction nowhere displays the power of contrast so forcibly as in these two characters: perfectly opposed to each other, not only in their minds and general habits, but in the minutest details of personal appearance.

It was a great effort of art for Cervantes to maintain the dignity of his hero's character in the midst of the whimsical and ridiculous distresses in which he has perpetually involved him. His infirmity leads us to distinguish between his character and his conduct, and to absolve him from all responsibility for the latter. The author's art is no less shown in regard to the other principal figure in the piece, Sancho Panza, who, with the most contemptible qualities, contrives to keep a strong hold on our interest by the kindness of his nature and his shrewd understanding. He is far too shrewd a person, indeed, to make it natural for him to have followed so crack-brained a master unless bribed by the promise of a substantial recompense. He is a personification, as it were, of the popular wisdom,—a "bundle of proverbs," as

his master somewhere styles him; and proverbs are the most compact form in which the wisdom of a people is digested. They have been collected into several distinct works in Spain, where they exceed in number those of any other, if not every other, country in Europe. As many of them are of great antiquity, they are of inestimable price with the Castilian purists, as affording rich samples of obsolete idioms and the various mutations of the language.

The subordinate portraits in the romance, though not wrought with the same care, are admirable studies of national character. In this view, the Don Quixote may be said to form an epoch in the history of letters, as the original of that kind of composition, the Novel of Character, which is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of modern literature. When well executed, this sort of writing rises to the dignity of history itself, and may be said to perform no insignificant part of the functions of the latter. History describes men less as they are than as they appear, as they are playing a part on the great political theatre,—men in masquerade. It rests on state documents, which too often cloak real purposes under an artful veil of policy, or on the accounts of contemporaries blinded by passion or interest. Even without these deductions, the revolutions of states, their wars, and their intrigues do not present the only aspect, nor, perhaps, the most interesting, under which human nature can be studied. It is man in his domestic relations, around his own fireside, where alone his real character can be truly

disclosed; in his ordinary occupations in society, whether for purposes of profit or of pleasure; in his every-day manner of living, his tastes and opinions, as drawn out in social intercourse; it is, in short, under all those forms which make up the interior of society that man is to be studied, if we would get the true form and pressure of the age, if, in short, we would obtain clear and correct ideas of the actual progress of civilization.

But these topics do not fall within the scope of the historian. He cannot find authentic materials for them. They belong to the novelist, who, indeed, contrives his incidents and creates his characters, but who, if true to his art, animates them with the same tastes, sentiments, and motives of action which belong to the period of his fiction. His portrait is not the less true because no individual has sat for it. He has seized the physiognomy of the times. Who is there that does not derive a more distinct idea of the state of society and manners in Scotland from the Waverley novels than from the best of its historians? of the condition of the Middle Ages from the single romance of Ivanhoe than from the volumes of Hume or Hallam? In like manner, the pencil of Cervantes has given a far more distinct and a richer portraiture of life in Spain in the sixteenth century than can be gathered from a library of monkish chronicles.

Spain, which furnished the first good model of this kind of writing, seems to have possessed more ample materials for it than any other country except England. This is perhaps owing in a great

degree to the freedom and originality of the popular character. It is the country where the lower classes make the nearest approach, in their conversation, to what is called humor. Many of the national proverbs are seasoned with it, as well as the *picaresco* tales, the indigenous growth of the soil, where, however, the humor runs rather too much to mere practical jokes. The free expansion of the popular characteristics may be traced, in part, to the freedom of the political institutions of the country before the iron hand of the Austrian dynasty was laid on it. The long wars with the Moslem invaders called every peasant into the field, and gave him a degree of personal consideration. In some of the provinces, as Catalonia, the democratic spirit frequently rose to an uncontrollable height. In this free atmosphere the rich and peculiar traits of national character were unfolded. The territorial divisions which marked the Peninsula, broken up anciently into a number of petty and independent states, gave, moreover, great variety to the national portraiture. The rude Asturian, the haughty and indolent Castilian, the industrious Aragonese, the independent Catalan, the jealous and wily Andalusian, the effeminate Valencian, and magnificent Granadine, furnished an infinite variety of character and costume for the study of the artist. The intermixture of Asiatic races to an extent unknown in any other European land was favorable to the same result. The Jews and the Moors were settled in too great numbers, and for too many centuries, in the land, not to have

left traces of their Oriental civilization. The best blood of the country has flowed from what the modern Spaniard—the Spaniard of the Inquisition—regards as impure sources; and a work, popular in the Peninsula, under the name of *Tizon de España*, or "Brand of Spain," maliciously traces back the pedigrees of the noblest houses in the kingdom to a Jewish or Morisco origin. All these circumstances have conspired to give a highly poetic interest to the character of the Spaniards; to make them, in fact, the most picturesque of European nations, affording richer and far more various subjects for the novelist than other nations whose peculiarities have been kept down by the weight of a despotic government or the artificial and levelling laws of fashion.

There is one other point of view in which the Don Quixote presents itself, that of its didactic import. It is not merely moral in its general tendency, though this was a rare virtue in the age in which it was written, but is replete with admonition and criticism, oftentimes requiring great boldness, as well as originality, in the author. Such, for instance, are the derision of witchcraft, and other superstitions common to the Spaniards; the ridicule of torture, which, though not used in the ordinary courts, was familiar to the Inquisition; the frequent strictures on various departments and productions of literature. The literary criticism scattered throughout the work shows a profound acquaintance with the true principles of taste far before his time, and which has left his judgments of the writings of his countrymen still of para-

mount authority. In truth, the great scope of his work was didactic, for it was a satire against the false taste of his age. And never was there a satire so completely successful. The last romance of chivalry, before the appearance of the Don Quixote, came out in 1602. It was the last that was ever published in Spain. So completely was this kind of writing, which had bade defiance to every serious effort, now extinguished by the breath of ridicule,

> "That soft and summer breath, whose subtile power
> Passes the strength of storms in their most desolate hour."

It was impossible for any new author to gain an audience. The public had seen how the thunder was fabricated. The spectator had been behind the scenes, and witnessed of what cheap materials kings and queens were made. It was impossible for him, by any stretch of imagination, to convert the tinsel and painted baubles which he had seen there into diadems and sceptres. The illusion had fled forever.

Satire seldom survives the local or temporary interests against which it is directed. It loses its life with its sting. The satire of Cervantes is an exception. The objects at which it was aimed have long since ceased to interest. The modern reader is attracted to the book simply by its execution as a work of art, and, from want of previous knowledge, comprehends few of the allusions which gave such infinite zest to the perusal in its own day. Yet under all these disadvantages, it not only

maintains its popularity, but is far more widely extended, and enjoys far higher consideration, than in the life of its author. Such are the triumphs of genius!

Cervantes correctly appreciated his own work. He more than once predicted its popularity. "I will lay a wager," says Sancho, "that before long there will not be a chop-house, tavern, or barber's stall but will have a painting of our achievements." The honest squire's prediction was verified in his own day; and the author might have seen paintings of his work on wood and on canvas, as well as copper-plate engravings of it. Besides several editions of it at home, it was printed, in his own time, in Portugal, Flanders, and Italy. Since that period it has passed into numberless editions both in Spain and other countries. It has been translated into nearly every European tongue over and over again; into English ten times, into French eight, and others less frequently. We will close the present notice with a brief view of some of the principal editions, together with that at the head of our article.

The currency of the romance among all classes frequently invited its publication by incompetent hands; and the consequence was a plentiful crop of errors, until the original text was nearly despoiled of its beauty, while some passages were omitted, and foreign ones still more shamefully interpolated. The first attempt to retrieve the original from these harpies, who thus foully violated it, singularly enough, was made in England. Queen Caroline, the wife of George the Second,

had formed a collection of books of romance, which she playfully named the "library of the sage Merlin." The romance of Cervantes alone was wanting; and a nobleman, Lord Carteret, undertook to provide her with a suitable copy at his own expense. This was the origin of the celebrated edition published by Tonson, in London, 1738, 4 tom. 4to. It contained the Life of the Author, written for it by the learned Mayans y Siscar. It was the first biography (which merits the name) of Cervantes; and it shows into what oblivion his personal history had already fallen, that no less than seven towns claimed each the honor of giving him birth. The fate of Cervantes resembled that of Homer.

The example thus set by foreigners excited an honorable emulation at home; and at length, in 1780, a magnificent edition, from the far-famed press of Ibarra, was published at Madrid, in 4 tom. 4to, under the auspices of the Royal Spanish Academy; which, unlike many other literary bodies of sounding name, has contributed most essentially to the advancement of letters, not merely by original memoirs, but by learned and very beautiful editions of ancient writers. Its Don Quixote exhibits a most careful revision of the text, collated from the several copies printed in the author's lifetime and supposed to have received his own emendations. There is too good reason to believe that these corrections were made with a careless hand; at all events, there is a plentiful harvest of typographical blunders in these primitive editions.

Prefixed to the publication of the Academy is

the Life of Cervantes, by Rios, written with uncommon elegance, and containing nearly all that is of much interest in his personal history. A copious analysis of the romance follows, in which a parallel is closely elaborated between it and the poems of Homer. But the romantic and the classical differ too widely from each other to admit of such an approximation; and the method of proceeding necessarily involves its author in infinite absurdities, which show an entire ignorance of the true principles of philosophical criticism, and which he would scarcely have fallen into had he given heed to the maxims of Cervantes himself.

In the following year, 1781, there appeared another edition in England deserving of particular notice. It was prepared by the Rev. Mr. Bowle, a clergyman at Idemestone, who was so enamored of the romance of Cervantes that, after collecting a library of such works as could any way illustrate his author, he spent fourteen years in preparing a suitable commentary on him. There was ample scope for such a commentary. Many of the satirical allusions of the romance were misunderstood, as we have said, owing to ignorance of the books of chivalry at which they were aimed. Many incidents and usages, familiar to the age of Cervantes, had long since fallen into oblivion; and much of the idiomatic phraseology had grown to be obsolete, and required explanation. Cervantes himself had fallen into some egregious blunders, which in his subsequent revision of the work he had neglected to set right. The reader will readily call to mind the confusion as to Sancho's Dapple, who

appears and disappears, most unaccountably, on the scene, according as the author happens to remember or forget that he was stolen. He afterwards corrected this in two or three instances, but left three or four others unheeded. To the same account must be charged numberless gross anachronisms. Indeed, the whole Second Part is an anachronism, since the author introduces his hero criticising his First Part, in which his own epitaph is recorded.

Cervantes seems to have had a great distaste for the work of revision. Some of his blunders he laid at the printer's door, and others he dismissed with the remark, more ingenious than true, that they were like moles, which, though blemishes in themselves, add to the beauty of the countenance. He little dreamed that his lapses were to be watched so narrowly, that a catalogue was actually to be set down of all his repetitions and inconsistencies, and that each of his hero's sallies was to be adjusted by an accurate chronological table like any real history. He would have been still slower to believe that in the middle of the eighteenth century a learned society, the Academy of Literature and Fine Arts at Troyes, in Champagne, should have chosen a deputation of their body to visit Spain and examine the library of the Escurial, in order to obtain, if possible, the original MS. of that Arabian sage from whom Cervantes professed to have translated his romance. This was to be more mad than Don Quixote himself; yet this actually happened.

Bowle's edition was printed in six volumes

quarto; the two last contained notes, illustrations, and index, *all, as well as the text, in Castilian.* Watt, in his laborious "Bibliotheca Britannica," remarks that the book did not come up to the public expectation. If so, the public must have been very unreasonable. It was a marvellous achievement for a foreigner. It was the first attempt at a commentary on the Quixote, and, although doubtless exhibiting inaccuracies which a native might have escaped, has been a rich mine of illustration, from which native critics have helped themselves most liberally, and sometimes with scanty acknowledgement.

The example of the English critic led to similar labors in Spain, among the most successful of which may be mentioned the edition by Pellicer, which has commended itself to every scholar by its very learned disquisitions on many topics both of history and criticism. It also contains a valuable memoir of Cervantes, whose life has since been written, in a manner which leaves nothing farther to be desired, by Navarrete, well known by his laborious publication of documents relative to the early Spanish discoveries. His biography of the novelist comprehends all the information, direct and subsidiary, which can now be brought together for the elucidation of his personal or literary history. If Cervantes, like his great contemporary, Shakspeare, has left few authentic details of his existence, the deficiency has been diligently supplied in both cases by speculation and conjecture.

There was still wanting a classical commentary on the Quixote devoted to the literary execution

of the work. Such a commentary has at length appeared from the pen of Clemencin, the accomplished secretary of the Spanish Academy of History, who had acquired a high reputation for himself by the publication of the sixth volume of its memoirs, the exclusive work of his own hand. In his edition of the romance, besides illuminating with rare learning many of the obscure points in the narrative, he has accompanied the text with a severe but enlightened criticism, which, while it boldly exposes occasional offences against taste or grammar, directs the eye to those latent beauties which might escape a rapid or an ordinary reader. We much doubt if any Castilian classic has been so ably illustrated. Unfortunately, the First Part only was completed by the commentator, who died very recently. It will not be easy to find a critic equally qualified by his taste and erudition for the completion of the work.

The English, as we have noticed, have evinced their relish for Cervantes not only by their critical labors but by repeated translations. Some of these are executed with much skill, considering the difficulty of correctly rendering the idiomatic phraseology of humorous dialogue. The most popular versions are those of Motteux, Jarvis, and Smollett. Perhaps the first is the best of all. It was by a Frenchman, who came over to England in the time of James the Second. It betrays nothing of its foreign parentage, however, while its rich and racy diction and its quaint turns of expression are admirably suited to convey a lively and very faithful image of the original. The slight tinge of an-

tiquity which belongs to the time is not displeasing, and comports well with the tone of knightly dignity which distinguishes the hero. Lockhart's notes and poetieal versions of old Castilian ballads, appended to the recent edition of Motteux, have rendered it by far the most desirable translation. It is singular that the first classical edition of Don Quixote, the first commentary, and probably the best foreign translation should have been all produced in England; and, farther, that the English commentator should have written in Spanish, and the English translation have been by a Frenchman.

We now come to Mr. Sales's recent edition of the original, the first, probably, which has appeared in the New World, of the one-half of which the Spanish is the spoken language. There was great need of some uniform edition to meet the wants of our University, where much inconvenience has been long experienced from the discrepancies of the copies used. The only ones to be procured in this country are contemptible both in regard to printing and paper, and are defaced by the grossest errors. They are the careless manufacture of ill-informed Spanish booksellers, made to sell, and dear to boot.

Mr. Sales has adopted a right plan for remedying these several evils. He has carefully formed his text on that of the last and most correct edition of the Academy, and, as he has stereotyped the work, any verbal errors may be easily rectified. The Academy has substituted the modern orthography for that of Cervantes, who, independently

of the change which has gradually taken place in the language, seems to have had no uniform system himself. Mr. Sales has conformed to the rules prescribed by this high authority for regulating his orthography, accent, and punctuation. In some instances, only, he has adopted the ancient usage in beginning words with *f* instead of *h*, and retaining obsolete terminations of verbs, as *hablades* for *hablais*, *hablabades* for *hablabais*, *amades* for *amais*, *amabades* for *amabais*, etc., no doubt as better suited to the lofty tone of the good knight's discourses, who himself affected a reverence for the antique in his conversation to which his translators have not always sufficiently attended.

In one respect the present editor has made some alterations not before attempted, we believe, in the text of his original. We have already noticed the inaccuracies of the early copies of the Don Quixote, partly imputable to Cervantes himself, and in a greater degree, doubtless, to his printers. There is no way of rectifying such errors by collation with the author's manuscript, which has long since disappeared. All that can now be done, therefore, is to point out the purer reading in a note, as Clemencin, Arrieta, and other commentators have done, or, as Mr. Sales has preferred, to introduce it into the body of the text. We will give one or two specimens of these alterations:

"Poco mas ó menos."—Tom. i. p. 141.

The reading in the old editions is "poco mas á menos," a phrase as unintelligible in Spanish now as

its literal translation would be in English, although in use, it would seem from other authorities, in the age of Cervantes.

"Por tales os juzgué y tuve."—Tom. i. p. 104.

The old editions add "siempre," which clearly is incorrect, since Don Quixote is speaking of the present occasion.

"*Don Quijote* quedó admirado."—Tom. i. p. 143.

Other editions read "*El cual* quedó," etc. The use of the relative leaves the reader in doubt who is intended, and Mr. Sales, in conformity to Clemencin's suggestion, has made the sentence clear by substituting the name of the knight.

"Donde les *sucedieron* cosas," etc.—Tom. ii. p. 44.

In other editions, "*sucedió;*" bad grammar, since it agrees with a plural noun.

"En tan poco espacio de tiempo como ha que *estuvo* allá," etc. (tom. ii. p. 132), instead of "*está* allá," clearly the wrong tense, since the verb refers to past time.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples, a sufficient number of which have been cited to show on what principles the emendations have been made. They have been confined to the correction of such violations of grammar, or such inaccuracies of expression, as obscure or distort the meaning. They have been made with great circumspection, and in obedience to the suggestion of the highest authorities in the language. For the critical scholar, who would naturally prefer the primitive text with all

its impurities, they were not designed. But they are of infinite value to the general reader and the student, who may now read this beautiful classic purified from those verbal blemishes which, however obvious to a native, could not fail to mislead a foreigner.

Besides these emendations, Mr. Sales has illustrated the work by prefixing to it the admirable preliminary discourse of Clemencin, and by a considerable body of notes, selected and abridged from the most approved commentators; and, as the object has been to explain the text to the reader, not to involve him in antiquarian or critical disquisitions, when his authorities have failed to do this the editor has supplied notes of his own, throwing much light on matters least familiar to a foreigner. In this part of his work we think he might have derived considerable aid from Bowle, whom he does not appear to have consulted. The Castilian commentator Arrieta, whom he liberally uses, is largely indebted to the English critic, who, as a foreigner, moreover, has been led into many seasonable explanations that would be superfluous to a Spaniard.

We may notice another peculiarity in the present edition, that of breaking up the text into reasonable paragraphs, in imitation of the English translations; a great relief to the spirits of the reader, which are seriously damped, in the ancient copies, by the interminable waste of page upon page, without these convenient halting-places.

But our readers, we fear, will think we are running into an interminable waste of discussion. We

will only remark, therefore, in conclusion, that the mechanical execution of the book is highly creditable to our press. It is, moreover, adorned with etchings by our American Cruikshank, Johnston, —some of them original, but mostly copies from the late English edition of Smollett's translations. They are designed and executed with much spirit, and, no doubt, would have fully satisfied honest Sancho, who predicted this kind of immortality for himself and his master.

We congratulate the public on the possession of an edition of the pride of Castilian literature from our own press in so neat a form and executed with so much correctness and judgment; and we trust that the ambition of its respectable editor will be gratified by its becoming, as it well deserves to be, the manual of the student in every seminary throughout the country where the noble Castilian language is taught.

SIR WALTER SCOTT *

(April, 1838.)

THERE is no kind of writing, which has truth and instruction for its main object, so interesting and popular, on the whole, as biography. History, in its larger sense, has to deal with masses, which, while they divide the attention by the dazzling variety of objects, from their very generality are scarcely capable of touching the heart. The great objects on which it is employed have little relation to the daily occupations with which the reader is most intimate. A nation, like a corporation, seems to have no soul, and its checkered vicissitudes may be contemplated rather with curiosity for the lessons they convey than with personal sympathy. How different are the feelings excited by the fortunes of an individual,—one of the mighty mass, who in the page of history is swept along the current unnoticed and unknown! Instead of a mere abstraction, at once we see a being like ourselves, "fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer" as we are. We place ourselves in his position, and see the passing

* 1. "Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart., by J. G. Lockhart. Five vols. 12mo. Boston: Otis, Broaders & Co., 1837."
2. "Recollections of Sir Walter Scott, Bart., 16mo. London: James Fraser, 1837."

current of events with the same eyes. We become a party to all his little schemes, share in his triumphs, or mourn with him in the disappointment of defeat. His friends become our friends. We learn to take an interest in their characters from their relation to him. As they pass away from the stage one after another, and as the clouds of misfortune, perhaps, or of disease, settle around the evening of his own day, we feel the same sadness that steals over us on a retrospect of earlier and happier hours. And when at last we have followed him to the tomb, we close the volume, and feel that we have turned over another chapter in the history of life.

On the same principles, probably, we are more moved by the exhibition of those characters whose days have been passed in the ordinary routine of domestic and social life than by those most intimately connected with the great public events of their age. What, indeed, is the history of such men but that of the times? The life of Wellington or of Bonaparte is the story of the wars and revolutions of Europe. But that of Cowper, gliding away in the seclusion of rural solitude, reflects all those domestic joys, and, alas! more than the sorrows, which gather around every man's fireside and his heart. In this way the story of the humblest individual, faithfully recorded, becomes an object of lively interest. How much is that interest increased in the case of a man like Scott, who, from his own fireside, has sent forth a voice to cheer and delight millions of his fellow-men,—whose life was passed within the narrow circle of

his own village, as it were, but who, nevertheless, has called up more shapes and fantasies within that magic circle, acted more extraordinary parts, and afforded more marvels for the imagination to feed on, than can be furnished by the most nimble-footed, nimble-tongued traveller, from Marco Polo down to Mrs. Trollope, and that literary Sindbad, Captain Hall.

Fortunate as Sir Walter Scott was in his life, it is not the least of his good fortunes that he left the task of recording it to one so competent as Mr. Lockhart, who to a familiarity with the person and habits of his illustrious subject unites such entire sympathy with his pursuits and such fine tact and discrimination in arranging the materials for their illustration. We have seen it objected that the biographer has somewhat transcended his lawful limits in occasionally exposing what a nice tenderness for the reputation of Scott should have led him to conceal; but, on reflection, we are not inclined to adopt these views. It is difficult to prescribe any precise rule by which the biographer should be guided in exhibiting the peculiarities, and, still more, the defects, of his subject. He should, doubtless, be slow to draw from obscurity those matters which are of a strictly personal and private nature, particularly when they have no material bearing on the character of the individual. But whatever the latter has done, said, or written to others can rarely be made to come within this rule. A swell of panegyric, where every thing is in broad sunshine, without the relief of a shadow to contrast it, is out of nature, and must bring dis-

credit on the whole. Nor is it much better when a sort of twilight mystification is spread over a man's actions, until, as in the case of all biographies of Cowper previous to that of Southey, we are completely bewildered respecting the real motives of conduct. If ever there was a character above the necessity of any management of this sort, it was Scott's; and we cannot but think that the frank exposition of the minor blemishes which sully it, by securing the confidence of the reader in the general fidelity of the portraiture, and thus disposing him to receive without distrust those favorable statements in his history which might seem incredible, as they certainly are unprecedented, is, on the whole, advantageous to his reputation. As regards the moral effect on the reader, we may apply Scott's own argument for not always recompensing suffering virtue, at the close of his fictions, with temporal prosperity,—that such an arrangement would convey no moral to the heart whatever, since a glance at the great picture of life would show that virtue is not always thus rewarded.

In regard to the literary execution of Mr. Lockhart's work, the public voice has long since pronounced on it. A prying criticism may discern a few of those contraband epithets and slipshod sentences, more excusable in *young* "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk," where, indeed, they are thickly sown, than in the production of a grave Aristarch of British criticism. But this is small game, where every reader of the least taste and sensibility must find so much to applaud. It is enough to say that in passing from the letters of Scott, with which the

work is enriched, to the text of the biographer, we find none of those chilling transitions which occur on the like occasions in more bungling productions; as, for example, in that recent one in which the unfortunate Hannah More is done to death by her friend Roberts. On the contrary, we are sensible only to a new variety of beauty in the style of composition. The correspondence is illumined by all that is needed to make it intelligible to a stranger, and selected with such discernment as to produce the clearest impression of the character of its author. The mass of interesting details is conveyed in language richly colored with poetic sentiment, and, at the same time, without a tinge of that mysticism which, as Scott himself truly remarked, "will never do for a writer of fiction, no, nor of history, nor moral essays, nor sermons," but which, nevertheless, finds more or less favor in our own community, at the present day, in each and all of these.

The second work which we have placed at the head of this article, and from which the last remark of Sir Walter's was borrowed, is a series of notices originally published in "Fraser's Magazine," but now collected, with considerable additions, into a separate volume. Its author, Mr. Robert Pierce Gillies, is a gentleman of the Scotch bar, favorably known by translations from the German. The work conveys a lively report of several scenes and events which before the appearance of Lockhart's book were of more interest and importance than they can now be, lost as they are in the flood of light which is poured on us from that source. In

the absence of the sixth and last volume, however, Mr. Gillies may help us to a few particulars respecting the closing years of Sir Walter's life, that may have some novelty—we know not how much to be relied on—for the reader. In the present notice of a work so familiar to most persons, we shall confine ourselves to some of those circumstances which contribute to form, or have an obvious connection with, his literary character.

Walter Scott was born at Edinburgh, August 15th, 1771. The character of his father, a respectable member of that class of attorneys who in Scotland are called Writers to the Signet, is best conveyed to the reader by saying that he sat for the portrait of Mr. Saunders Fairford in "Redgauntlet." His mother was a woman of taste and imagination, and had an obvious influence in guiding those of her son. His ancestors, by both father's and mother's side, were of "gentle blood," a position which, placed between the highest and the lower ranks in society, was extremely favorable, as affording facilities for communication with both. A lameness in his infancy,—a most fortunate lameness for the world, if, as Scott says, it spoiled a soldier,—and a delicate constitution, made it expedient to try the efficacy of country air and diet, and he was placed under the roof of his paternal grandfather at Sandy-Knowe, a few miles distant from the capital. Here his days were passed in the open fields, "with no other fellowship," as he says, "than that of the sheep and lambs;" and here, in the lap of Nature,

"Meet nurse for a poetic child,"

his infant vision was greeted with those rude, romantic scenes which his own verses have since hallowed for the pilgrims from every clime. In the long evenings, his imagination, as he grew older, was warmed by traditionary legends of border heroism and adventure, repeated by the aged relative, who had herself witnessed the last gleams of border chivalry. His memory was one of the first powers of his mind which exhibited an extraordinary development. One of the longest of these old ballads, in particular, stuck so close to it, and he repeated it with such stentorian vociferation, as to draw from the minister of a neighboring kirk the testy exclamation, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is."

On his removal to Edinburgh, in his eighth year, he was subjected to different influences. His worthy father was a severe martinet in all the forms of his profession, and, it may be added, of his religion, which he contrived to make somewhat burdensome to his more volatile son. The tutor was still more strict in his religious sentiments, and the lightest literary diversion in which either of them indulged was such as could be gleaned from the time-honored folios of Archbishop Spottiswoode or worthy Robert Wodrow. Even here, however, Scott's young mind contrived to gather materials and impulses for future action. In his long arguments with Master Mitchell, he became steeped in the history of the Covenanters and the persecuted Church of Scotland, while he was still more rooted in his own

Jacobite notions, early instilled into his mind by the tales of his relatives of Sandy-Knowe, whose own family had been out in the "affair of forty-five." Amid the professional and polemical worthies of his father's library, Scott detected a copy of Shakspeare, and he relates with what *goût* he used to creep out of his bed, where he had been safely deposited for the night, and, by the light of the fire, *in puris naturalibus*, pore over the pages of the great magician, and study those mighty spells by which he gave to airy fantasies the forms and substance of humanity. Scott distinctly recollected the time and the spot where he first opened a volume of Percy's "Reliques of English Poetry;" a work which may have suggested to him the plan and the purpose of the "Border Minstrelsy." Every day's experience shows how much more actively the business of education goes on out of school than in it; and Scott's history shows equally that genius, whatever obstacles may be thrown in its way in one direction, will find room for its expansion in another, as the young tree sends forth its shoots most prolific in that quarter where the sunshine is permitted to fall on it.

At the High School, in which he was placed by his father at an early period, he seems not to have been particularly distinguished in the regular course of studies. His voracious appetite for books, however, of a certain cast, as romances, chivalrous tales, and worm-eaten chronicles scarcely less chivalrous, and his wonderful memory for such reading as struck his fancy, soon

made him regarded by his fellows as a phenomenon of black-letter scholarship, which, in process of time, achieved for him the cognomen of that redoubtable schoolman, Duns Scotus. He now also gave evidence of his powers of creation as well as of acquisition. He became noted for his own stories, generally bordering on the marvellous, with a plentiful seasoning of knight-errantry, which suited his bold and chivalrous temper. "Slink over beside me, Jamie," he would whisper to his school-fellow Ballantyne, "and I'll tell you a story." Jamie was, indeed, destined to sit beside him during the greater part of his life.

The same tastes and talents continued to display themselves more strongly with increasing years. Having beaten pretty thoroughly the ground of romantic and legendary lore, at least so far as the English libraries to which he had access would permit, he next endeavored, while at the University, to which he had been transferred from the High School, to pursue the same subject in the Continental languages. Many were the strolls which he took in the neighborhood, especially to Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, where, perched on some almost inaccessible eyry, he might be seen conning over his Ariosto or Cervantes, or some other bard of romance, with some favorite companion of his studies, or pouring into the ears of the latter his own boyish legends, glowing with

> "achievements high,
> And circumstance of chivalry."

A critical knowledge of these languages he

seems not to have obtained, and even in the French made but an indifferent figure in conversation. An accurate acquaintance with the pronunciation and prosody of a foreign tongue is undoubtedly a desirable accomplishment; but it is, after all, a mere accomplishment, subordinate to the great purposes for which a language is to be learned. Scott did not, as is too often the case, mistake the shell for the kernel. He looked on language only as the key to unlock the foreign stores of wisdom, the pearls of inestimable price, wherever found, with which to enrich his native literature.

After a brief residence at the University, he was regularly indented as an apprentice to his father in 1786. One can hardly imagine a situation less congenial with the ardent, effervescing spirit of a poetic fancy, fettered down to a daily routine of drudgery scarcely above that of a mere scrivener. It proved, however, a useful school of discipline to him. It formed early habits of method, punctuality, and laborious industry,—business habits, in short, most adverse to the poetic temperament, but indispensable to the accomplishment of the gigantic tasks which he afterwards assumed. He has himself borne testimony to his general diligence in his new vocation, and tells us that on one occasion he transcribed no less than a hundred and twenty folio pages at a sitting.

In the midst of these mechanical duties, he did not lose sight of the favorite objects of his study and meditation. He made frequent excursions into the Lowland as well as Highland districts in search of traditionary relics. These pilgrimages

he frequently performed on foot. His constitution, now become hardy by severe training, made him careless of exposure, and his frank and warm-hearted manners—eminently favorable to his purposes, by thawing at once any feelings of frosty reserve which might have encountered a stranger—made him equally welcome at the staid and decorous manse and at the rough but hospitable board of the peasant. Here was, indeed, the study of the future novelist, the very school in which to meditate those models of character and situation which he was afterwards, long afterwards, to transfer, in such living colors, to the canvas. "He was makin' himsel a' the time," says one of his companions, "but he didna ken, maybe, what he was about till years had passed. At first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun." The honest writer to the signet does not seem to have thought it either so funny or so profitable; for on his son's return from one of these *raids*, as he styled them, the old gentleman peevishly inquired how he had been living so long. "Pretty much like the young ravens," answered Walter; "I only wished I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in the Vicar of Wakefield. If I had his art, I should like nothing better than to tramp like him from cottage to cottage over the world." "I doubt," said the grave clerk to the signet, "I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a *gangrel scrapegut!*" Perhaps even the revelation, could it have been made to him, of his son's future literary glory, would scarcely have satisfied the worthy

father, who probably would have regarded a seat on the bench of the Court of Sessions as much higher glory. At all events, this was not far from the judgment of Dominie Mitchell, who, in his notice of his illustrious pupil, "sincerely regrets that Sir Walter's precious time was devoted to the *dulce* rather than the *utile* of composition, and that his great talents should have been wasted on such subjects!"

It is impossible to glance at Scott's early life without perceiving how powerfully all its circumstances, whether accidental or contrived, conspired to train him for the peculiar position he was destined to occupy in the world of letters. There never was a character in whose infant germ the mature and fully-developed lineaments might be more distinctly traced. What he was in his riper age, so he was in his boyhood. We discern the same tastes, the same peculiar talents, the same social temper and affections, and, in a great degree, the same habits,—in their embryo state, of course, but distinctly marked; and his biographer has shown no little skill in enabling us to trace their gradual, progressive expansion from the hour of his birth up to the full prime and maturity of manhood.

In 1792, Scott, whose original destination of a writer had been changed to that of an advocate,—from his father's conviction, as it would seem, of the superiority of his talents to the former station,—was admitted to the Scottish bar. Here he continued in assiduous attendance during the regular terms, but more noted for his stories in the Outer

House than his arguments in court. It may appear singular that a person so gifted both as a writer and as a *raconteur* should have had no greater success in his profession. But the case is not uncommon. Indeed, experience shows that the most eminent writers have not made the most successful speakers. It is not more strange than that a good writer of novels should not excel as a dramatic author. Perhaps a consideration of the subject would lead us to refer the phenomena in both cases to the same principle. At all events, Scott was an exemplification of both, and we leave the solution to those who have more leisure and ingenuity to unravel the mystery.

Scott's leisure, in the mean time, was well employed in storing his mind with German romance, with whose wild fictions, intrenching on the grotesque, he found at that time more sympathy than in later life. In 1796 he first appeared before the public as a translator of Bürger's well-known ballads, thrown off by him at a heat, and which found favor with the few into whose hands they passed. He subsequently adventured in Monk Lewis's crazy bark, "Tales of Wonder," which soon went to pieces, leaving, however, among its surviving fragments the scattered contributions of Scott.

At last, in 1802, he gave to the world his first two volumes of the "Border Minstrelsy," printed by his old school-fellow Ballantyne, and which, by the beauty of the typography, as well as literary execution, made an epoch in Scottish literary history. There was no work of Scott's after-life which showed the result of so much preliminary

labor. Before ten years old, he had collected several volumes of ballads and traditions, and we have seen how diligently he pursued the same vocation in later years. The publication was admitted to be far more faithful, as well as skilfully collated, than its prototype, the "Reliques" of Bishop Percy; while his notes contained a mass of antiquarian information relative to border life, conveyed in a style of beauty unprecedented in topics of this kind, and enlivened with a higher interest than poetic fiction. Percy's "Reliques" had prepared the way for the kind reception of the "Minstrelsy," by the general relish—notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's protest—it had created for the simple pictures of a pastoral and heroic time. Burns had since familiarized the English ear with the Doric melodies of his native land; and now a greater than Burns appeared, whose first production, by a singular chance, came into the world in the very year in which the Ayrshire minstrel was withdrawn from it, as if Nature had intended that the chain of poetic inspiration should not be broken.

The delight of the public was farther augmented on the appearance of the third volume of the "Minstrelsy," containing various imitations of the old ballad, which displayed the rich fashion of the antique, purified from the mould and rust by which the beauties of such weather-beaten trophies are defaced.

The first edition of the "Minstrelsy," consisting of eight hundred copies, went off, as Lockhart tells us, in less than a year; and the poet, on the

publication of a second, received five hundred pounds sterling from Longman,—an enormous price for such a commodity, but the best bargain, probably, that the bookseller ever made, as the subsequent sale has since extended to twenty thousand copies.

Scott was not in great haste to follow up his success. It was three years later before he took the field as an independent author, in a poem which at once placed him among the great original writers of his country. The "Lay of the Last Minstrel," a complete expansion of the ancient ballad into an epic form, was published in 1805. It was opening a new creation in the realm of fancy. It seemed as if the author had transfused into his page the strong delineations of the Homeric pencil, the rude but generous gallantry of a primitive period, softened by the more airy and magical inventions of Italian romance,* and conveyed in tones of natural melody such as had not been heard since the strains of Burns. The book speedily found that unprecedented circulation which all his subsequent compositions attained. Other writers had addressed themselves to a more peculiar and limited feeling,—to a narrower and,

* "Mettendo lo Turpin, lo metto anch' io,"
says Ariosto, playfully, when he tells a particularly tough story.

"I cannot tell how the truth may be,
I say the tale as 'twas said to me,"

says the author of the "Lay" on a similar occasion. The resemblance might be traced much farther than mere forms of expression, to the Italian, who, like

"*The Ariosto of the North,*
Sung ladye-love, and war, romance, and knightly worth."

generally, a more select audience. But Scott was found to combine all the qualities of interest for every order. He drew from the pure springs which gush forth in every heart. His narrative chained every reader's attention by the stirring variety of its incidents, while the fine touches of sentiment with which it abounded, like wild flowers springing up spontaneously around, were full of freshness and beauty that made one wonder others should not have stooped to gather them before.

The success of the "Lay" determined the course of its author's future life. Notwithstanding his punctual attention to his profession, his utmost profits for any one year of the ten he had been in practice had not exceeded two hundred and thirty pounds; and of late they had sensibly declined. Latterly, indeed, he had coquetted somewhat too openly with the Muse for his professional reputation. Themis has always been found a stern and jealous mistress, chary of dispensing her golden favors to those who are seduced into a flirtation with her more volatile sister.

Scott, however, soon found himself in a situation that made him independent of her favors. His income from the two offices to which he was promoted, of Sheriff of Selkirk, and Clerk of the Court of Sessions, was so ample, combined with what fell to him by inheritance and marriage, that he was left at liberty freely to consult his own tastes. Amid the seductions of poetry, however, he never shrunk from his burdensome professional duties; and he submitted to all their drudgery with

unflinching constancy when the labors of his pen made the emoluments almost beneath consideration. He never relished the idea of being divorced from active life by the solitary occupations of a recluse. And his official functions, however severely they taxed his time, may be said to have in some degree compensated him by the new scenes of life which they were constantly disclosing,—the very materials of those fictions on which his fame and his fortune were to be built.

Scott's situation was eminently propitious to literary pursuits. He was married, and passed the better portion of the year in the country, where the quiet pleasures of his fireside circle, and a keen relish for rural sports, relieved his mind and invigorated both health and spirits. In early life, it seems, he had been crossed in love; and, like Dante and Byron, to whom in this respect he is often compared, he had more than once, according to his biographer, shadowed forth in his verses the object of his unfortunate passion. He does not appear to have taken it very seriously, however, nor to have shown the morbid sensibility in relation to it discovered by both Byron and Dante, whose stern and solitary natures were cast in a very different mould from the social temper of Scott.

His next great poem was his "Marmion," transcending, in the judgment of many, all his other epics, and containing, in the judgment of all, passages of poetic fire which he never equalled, but which, nevertheless, was greeted on its entrance into the world by a critique, in the leading journal of the day, of the most caustic and unfriendly

temper. The journal was the Edinburgh, to which he had been a frequent contributor, and the reviewer was his intimate friend, Jeffrey. The unkindest cut in the article was the imputation of a neglect of Scottish character and feeling. "There is scarcely one trait of true Scottish nationality or patriotism introduced into the whole poem; and Mr. Scott's only expression of admiration for the beautiful country to which he belongs is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his Southern favorites." This of Walter Scott!

Scott was not slow, after this, in finding the political principles of the Edinburgh so repugnant to his own (and they certainly were as opposite as the poles) that he first dropped the journal, and next labored with unwearied diligence to organize another, whose main purpose should be to counteract the heresies of the former. This was the origin of the London Quarterly, more imputable to Scott's exertions than to those of any, indeed all, other persons. The result has been, doubtless, highly serviceable to the interests of both morals and letters. Not that the new Review was conducted with more fairness, or, in this sense, *principle*, than its antagonist. A remark of Scott's own, in a letter to Ellis, shows with how much principle. "I have run up an attempt on 'The Curse of Kehama' for the Quarterly. It affords cruel openings to the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I would have made a very different hand of it, indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*." But, although the fate of the individual was thus, to a

certain extent, a matter of caprice, or, rather, prejudgment, in the critic, yet the great abstract questions in morals, politics, and literature, by being discussed on both sides, were presented in a fuller and, of course, fairer light to the public. Another beneficial result to letters was—and we shall gain credit, at least, for candor in confessing it—that it broke down somewhat of that divinity which hedged in the despotic *we* of the reviewer so long as no rival arose to contest the sceptre. The claims to infallibility, so long and slavishly acquiesced in, fell to the ground when thus stoutly asserted by conflicting parties. It was pretty clear that the same thing could not be all black and all white at the same time. In short, it was the old story of pope and anti-pope; and the public began to find out that there might be hopes for the salvation of an author though damned by the literary popedom. Time, by reversing many of its decisions, must at length have shown the same thing.

But to return. Scott showed how nearly he had been touched to the quick by two other acts not so discreet. These were, the establishment of an Annual Register, and of the great publishing house of the Ballantynes, in which he became a silent partner. The last step involved him in grievous embarrassments, and stimulated him to exertions which required "a frame of adamant and soul of fire." At the same time, we find him overwhelmed with poetical, biographical, historical, and critical compositions, together with editorial labors of appalling magnitude. In this multiplication of himself in a thousand forms we see him always the

same, vigorous and effective. "Poetry," he says in one of his letters, "is a scourging crop, and ought not to be hastily repeated. Editing, therefore, may be considered as a green crop of turnips or pease, extremely useful to those whose circumstances do not admit of giving their farm a summer fallow." It might be regretted, however, that he should have wasted powers fitted for so much higher culture on the coarse products of a kitchen garden, which might have been safely trusted to inferior hands.

In 1811, Scott gave to the world his exquisite poem, "The Lady of the Lake." One of his fair friends had remonstrated with him on thus risking again the laurel he had already won. He replied, with characteristic and, indeed, prophetic spirit, "If I fail, *I will write prose all my life.* But if I succeed,

> 'Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet,
> The dirk an' the feather an' a'!"

In his eulogy on Byron, Scott remarks, "There has been no reposing under the shade of his laurels, no living upon the resource of past reputation; none of that *coddling* and petty precaution which little authors call 'taking care of their fame.' Byron let his fame take care of itself." Scott could not have more accurately described his own character.

The "Lady of the Lake" was welcomed with an enthusiasm surpassing that which attended any other of his poems. It seemed like the sweet breathings of his native pibroch, stealing over glen and mountain, and calling up all the delicious as-

sociations of rural solitude, which beautifully contrasted with the din of battle and the shrill cry of the war-trumpet that stirred the soul in every page of his "Marmion." The publication of this work carried his fame as a poet to its most brilliant height. The post-horse duty rose to an extraordinary degree in Scotland, from the eagerness of travellers to visit the localities of the poem. A more substantial evidence was afforded in its amazing circulation, and, consequently, its profits. The press could scarcely keep pace with the public demand, and no less than fifty thousand copies of it have been sold since the date of its appearance. The successful author received more than two thousand guineas from his production. Milton received ten pounds for the two editions which he lived to see of his "Paradise Lost." The Ayrshire bard had sighed for "a lass wi' a tocher." Scott had now found one where it was hardly to be expected, in the Muse.

While the poetical fame of Scott was thus at its zenith, a new star rose above the horizon, whose eccentric course and dazzling radiance completely bewildered the spectator. In 1812, "Childe Harold" appeared, and the attention seemed to be now called for the first time from the outward form of man and visible nature to the secret depths of the soul. The darkest recesses of human passion were laid open, and the note of sorrow was prolonged in tones of agonized sensibility, the more touching as coming from one who was placed on those dazzling heights of rank and fashion which, to the vulgar eye at least, seem to lie in unclouded

sunshine. Those of the present generation who have heard only the same key thrummed *ad nauseam* by the feeble imitators of his lordship can form no idea of the effect produced when the chords were first swept by the master's fingers. It was found impossible for the ear, once attuned to strains of such compass and ravishing harmony, to return with the same relish to purer, it might be, but tamer melody; and the sweet voice of the Scottish minstrel lost much of its power to charm, let him charm never so wisely. While "Rokeby" was in preparation, bets were laid on the rival candidates by the wits of the day. The sale of this poem, though great, showed a sensible decline in the popularity of its author. This became still more evident on the publication of "The Lord of the Isles;" and Scott admitted the conviction with his characteristic spirit and good nature. "'Well, James'" (he said to his printer), "'I have given you a week—what are people saying about the Lord of the Isles?' I hesitated a little, after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point. 'Come,' he said, 'speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony *with me* all of a sudden? But I see how it is; the result is given in one word,—*Disappointment.*' My silence admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event. At length he said, with perfect cheerfulness, 'Well, well, James, so be it; but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to

give over. Since one line has failed, we must stick to something else.'" This *something else* was a mine he had already hit upon, of invention and substantial wealth, such as Thomas the Rhymer, or Michael Scott, or any other adept in the black art had never dreamed of.

Everybody knows the story of the composition of "Waverley,"—the most interesting story in the annals of letters,—and how, some ten years after its commencement, it was fished out of some old lumber in an attic and completed in a few weeks for the press in 1814. Its appearance marks a more distinct epoch in English literature than that of the poetry of its author. All previous attempts in the same school of fiction—a school of English growth—had been cramped by the limited information or talent of the writers. Smollett had produced his spirited sea-pieces, and Fielding his warm sketches of country life, both of them mixed up with so much Billingsgate as required a strong flavor of wit to make them tolerable. Richardson had covered acres of canvas with his faithful family pictures. Mrs. Radcliffe had dipped up to the elbows in horrors; while Miss Burney's fashionable gossip, and Miss Edgeworth's Hogarth drawings of the prose—not the poetry—of life and character, had each and all found favor in their respective ways. But a work now appeared in which the author swept over the whole range of character with entire freedom as well as fidelity, ennobling the whole by high historic associations, and in a style varying with his theme, but whose pure and classic flow was tinctured with just so

much of poetic coloring as suited the purposes of romance. It was Shakspeare in prose.

The work was published, as we know, anonymously. Mr. Gillies states, however, that, while in the press, fragments of it were communicated to "Mr. Mackenzie, Dr. Brown, Mrs. Hamilton, and other *savans* or *savantes,* whose dicta on the merits of a new novel were considered unimpeachable." By their approbation "a strong body of friends was formed, and the curiosity of the public prepared the way for its reception." This may explain the rapidity with which the anonymous publication rose into a degree of favor which, though not less surely, perhaps, it might have been more slow in achieving. The author jealously preserved his incognito, and, in order to heighten the mystification, flung off almost simultaneously a variety of works, in prose and poetry, any one of which might have been the labor of months. The public for a moment was at fault. There seemed to be six Richmonds in the field. The world, therefore, was reduced to the dilemma of either supposing that half a dozen different hands could work in precisely the same style, or that one could do the work of half a dozen. With time, however, the veil wore thinner and thinner, until at length, and long before the ingenious argument of Mr. Adolphus, there was scarcely a critic so purblind as not to discern behind it the features of the mighty minstrel.

Constable had offered seven hundred pounds for the new novel. "It was," says Mr. Lockhart, "ten times as much as Miss Edgeworth ever realized

LUCY OF LAMMERMOOR.

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from any of her popular Irish tales." Scott declined the offer, which had been a good one for the bookseller had he made it as many thousand. But it passed the art of necromancy to divine this.

Scott, once entered on this new career, followed it up with an energy unrivalled in the history of literature. The public mind was not suffered to cool for a moment, before its attention was called to another miracle of creation from the same hand. Even illness, that would have broken the spirits of most men, as it prostrated the physical energies of Scott, opposed no impediment to the march of composition. When he could no longer write he could dictate, and in this way, amid the agonies of a racking disease, he composed "The Bride of Lammermoor," the "Legend of Montrose," and a great part of "Ivanhoe." The first, indeed, is darkened with those deep shadows that might seem thrown over it by the sombre condition of its author. But what shall we say of the imperturbable dry humor of the gallant Captain Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, or of the gorgeous revelries of Ivanhoe,—

> "Such sights as youthful poets dream
> On summer eves by haunted stream,"—

what shall we say of such brilliant day-dreams for a bed of torture? Never before had the spirit triumphed over such agonies of the flesh. "The best way," said Scott, in one of his talks with Gillies, "is, *if possible*, to triumph over disease by setting it at defiance; somewhat on the same principle as one avoids being stung by boldly grasping a nettle."

The prose fictions were addressed to a much larger audience than the poems could be. They had attractions for every age and every class. The profits, of course, were commensurate. Arithmetic has never been so severely taxed as in the computation of Scott's productions and the proceeds resulting from them. In one year he received (or, more properly, was credited with, for it is somewhat doubtful how much he actually received) fifteen thousand pounds for his novels, comprehending the first edition and the copyright. The discovery of this rich mine furnished its proprietor with the means of gratifying the fondest and even most chimerical desires. He had always coveted the situation of a lord of acres,—a Scottish laird,—where his passion for planting might find scope in the creation of whole forests,—for every thing with him was on a magnificent scale,—and where he might indulge the kindly feelings of his nature in his benevolent offices to a numerous and dependent tenantry. The few acres of the original purchase now swelled into hundreds, and, for aught we know, thousands; for one tract alone we find incidentally noticed as costing thirty thousand pounds. "It rounds off the property so handsomely," he says, in one of his letters. There was always a corner to "round off." The mansion, in the meantime, from a simple cottage *ornée* was amplified into the dimensions almost, as well as the bizarre proportions, of some old feudal castle. The furniture and decorations were of the costliest kind; the wainscots of oak and cedar; the floors tessellated with marbles, or woods of differ-

ent dyes; the ceilings fretted and carved with the delicate tracery of a Gothic abbey; the storied windows blazoned with the richly-colored insignia of heraldry, the walls garnished with time-honored trophies, or curious specimens of art, or volumes sumptuously bound,—in short, with all that luxury could demand or ingenuity devise; while a copious reservoir of gas supplied every corner of the mansion with such fountains of light as must have puzzled the genius of the *lamp* to provide for the less fortunate Aladdin.

Scott's exchequer must have been seriously taxed in another form by the crowds of visitors whom he entertained under his hospitable roof. There was scarcely a person of note, or, to say truth, not of note, who visited that country without paying his respects to the Lion of Scotland. Lockhart reckons up a full sixth of the British peerage who had been there within his recollection; and Captain Hall, in his amusing Notes, remarks that it was not unusual for a dozen or more coach-loads to find their way into his grounds in the course of the day, most of whom found or forced an entrance into the mansion. Such was the heavy tax paid by his celebrity, and, we may add, his good nature; for if the one had been a whit less than the other he could never have tolerated such a nuisance.

The cost of his correspondence gives one no light idea of the demands made on his time, as well as purse, in another form. His postage for letters, independently of franks, by which a large portion of it was covered, amounted to a hundred and fifty pounds, it seems, in the course of the year. In

this, indeed, should be included ten pounds for a pair of unfortunate *Cherokee Lovers,* sent all the way from our own happy land in order to be godfathered by Sir Walter on the London boards. Perhaps the smart-money he had to pay on this interesting occasion had its influence in mixing up rather more acid than was natural to him in his judgments of our countrymen. At all events, the Yankees find little favor on the few occasions on which he has glanced at them in his correspondence. "I am not at all surprised," he says, in a letter to Miss Edgeworth, "I am not at all surprised at what you say of the Yankees. They are a people possessed of very considerable energy, quickened and brought into eager action by an honorable love of their country and pride in their institutions; but they are as yet rude in their ideas of social intercourse, and totally ignorant, speaking generally, of all the art of good breeding, which consists chiefly in a postponement of one's own petty wishes or comforts to those of others. By rude questions and observations, an absolute disrespect to other people's feelings, and a ready indulgence of their own, they make one feverish in their company, though perhaps you may be ashamed to confess the reason. But this will wear off, and is already wearing away. Men, when they have once got benches, will soon fall into the use of cushions. They are advancing in the lists of our literature, and they will not be long deficient in the *petite morale,* especially as they have, like ourselves, the rage for travelling." On another occasion, he does, indeed, admit having met with,

in the course of his life, " four or five well-lettered Americans, ardent in pursuit of knowledge, and free from the ignorance and forward presumption which distinguish many of their countrymen." This seems hard measure; but perhaps we should find it difficult, among the many who have visited this country, to recollect as great a number of Englishmen—and Scotchmen to boot—entitled to a higher degree of commendation. It can hardly be that the well-informed and well-bred men of both countries make a point of staying at home; so we suppose we must look for the solution of the matter in the existence of some disagreeable ingredient, common to the characters of both nations, sprouting, as they do, from a common stock, which remains latent at home, and is never fully disclosed till they get into a foreign climate. But, as this problem seems pregnant with philosophical, physiological, and, for aught we know, psychological matter, we have not courage for it here, but recommend the solution to Miss Martineau, to whom it will afford a very good title for a new chapter in her next edition. The strictures we have quoted, however, to speak more seriously, are worth attending to, coming as they do from a shrewd observer, and one whose judgments, though here somewhat colored, no doubt, by political prejudice, are in the main distinguished by a sound and liberal philanthropy. But were he ten times an enemy, we would say, " Fas est ab hoste doceri."

With the splendid picture of the baronial residence at Abbotsford, Mr. Lockhart closes all that at this present writing we have received of his de-

lightful work in this country; and in the last sentence the melancholy sound of "the muffled drum" gives ominous warning of what we are to expect in the sixth and concluding volume. In the dearth of more authentic information, we will piece out our sketch with a few facts gleaned from the somewhat meagre bill of fare—meagre by comparison with the rich banquet of the true Amphitryon—afforded by the "Recollections" of Mr. Robert Pierce Gillies.

The unbounded popularity of the Waverley Novels led to still more extravagant anticipations on the part both of the publishers and author. Some hints of a falling off, though but slightly, in the public favor, were unheeded by both parties, though, to say truth, the exact state of things was never disclosed to Scott, it being Ballantyne's notion that it would prove a damper, and that the true course was "to press on more sail as the wind lulled." In these sanguine calculations, not only enormous sums, or, to speak correctly, *bills*, were given for what had been written, but the author's drafts, to the amount of many thousand pounds, were accepted by Constable in favor of works the very embryos of which lay, not only unformed, but unimagined, in the womb of time. In return for this singular accommodation, Scott was induced to endorse the drafts of his publisher, and in this way an amount of liabilities was incurred which, considering the character of the house and its transactions, it is altogether inexplicable that a person in the independent position of Sir Walter Scott should have subjected himself to for a moment.

He seems to have had entire confidence in the stability of the firm, a confidence to which it seems, from Mr. Gillies's account, not to have been entitled from the first moment of his connection with it. The great reputation of the house, however, the success and magnitude of some of its transactions, especially the publication of these novels, gave it a large credit, which enabled it to go forward with a great show of prosperity in ordinary times, and veiled its tottering state probably from Constable's own eyes. It is but the tale of yesterday. The case of Constable & Co. is, unhappily, a very familiar one to us. But when the hurricane of 1825 came on, it swept away all those buildings that were not founded on a rock, and those of Messrs. Constable, among others, soon became literally mere *castles in the air:* in plain English, the firm stopped payment. The assets were very trifling in comparison with the debts; and Sir Walter Scott was found on their paper to the frightful amount of one hundred thousand pounds!

His conduct on the occasion was precisely what was to have been anticipated from one who had declared, on a similar though much less appalling conjuncture, " I am always ready to make any sacrifices to do justice to my engagements, and would rather sell any thing, or every thing, than be less than a true man to the world." He put up his house and furniture in town at auction, delivered over his personal effects at Abbotsford, his plate, books, furniture, etc., to be held in trust for his creditors (the estate itself had been recently se-

cured to his son on occasion of his marriage), and bound himself to discharge a certain amount annually of the liabilities of the insolvent firm. He then, with his characteristic energy, set about the performance of his Herculean task. He took lodgings in a third-rate house in St. David's Street, saw but little company, abridged the hours usually devoted to his meals and his family, gave up his ordinary exercise, and, in short, adopted the severe habits of a regular Grub Street stipendiary.

"For many years," he said to Mr. Gillies, "I have been accustomed to hard work, because I found it a pleasure; now, with all due respect for Falstaff's principle, 'nothing on compulsion,' I certainly will not shrink from work because it has become necessary."

One of his first tasks was his "Life of Bonaparte," achieved in the space of thirteen months. For this he received fourteen thousand pounds, about eleven hundred per month,—not a bad bargain either, as it proved, for the publishers. The first two volumes of the nine which make up the English edition were a *rifacimento* of what he had before compiled for the "Annual Register." With every allowance for the inaccuracies and the excessive expansion incident to such a flashing rapidity of execution, the work, taking into view the broad range of its topics, its shrewd and sagacious reflections, and the free, bold and picturesque coloring of its narration, and, above all, considering *the brief time in which it was written*, is indisputably one of the most remarkable monuments of genius and industry—perhaps the most remarkable—ever recorded.

Scott's celebrity made every thing that fell from him, however trifling,—the dew-drops from the lion's mane,—of value. But none of the many adventures he embarked in, or, rather, set afloat, proved so profitable as the republication of his novels with his notes and illustrations. As he felt his own strength in the increasing success of his labors, he appears to have relaxed somewhat from them, and to have again resumed somewhat of his ancient habits, and, in a mitigated degree, his ancient hospitality. But still his exertions were too severe, and pressed heavily on the springs of his health, already deprived by age of their former elasticity and vigor. At length, in 1831, he was overtaken by one of those terrible shocks of paralysis which seem to have been constitutional in his family, but which, with more precaution and under happier auspices, might doubtless have been postponed, if not wholly averted. At this time he had in the short space of little more than five years, by his sacrifices and efforts, discharged about two-thirds of the debt for which he was responsible,—an astonishing result, wholly unparalleled in the history of letters. There is something inexpressibly painful in this spectacle of a generous heart thus courageously contending with fortune, bearing up against the tide with unconquerable spirit, and finally overwhelmed by it just within reach of shore.

The rest of his story is one of humiliation and sorrow. He was induced to take a voyage to the Continent to try the effect of a more genial climate. Under the sunny sky of Italy he seemed

to gather new strength for a while; but his eye fell with indifference on the venerable monuments which in better days would have kindled all his enthusiasm. The invalid sighed for his own home at Abbotsford. The heat of the weather and the fatigue of rapid travel brought on another shock, which reduced him to a state of deplorable imbecility. In this condition he returned to his own halls, where the sight of early friends, and of the beautiful scenery, the creation, as it were, of his own hands, seemed to impart a gleam of melancholy satisfaction, which soon, however, sunk into insensibility. To his present situation might well be applied the exquisite verses which he indited on another melancholy occasion:

"Yet not the landscape to mine eye
Bears those bright hues that once it bore;
Though Evening, with her richest dye,
Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

"With listless look along the plain
I see Tweed's silver current glide,
And coldly mark the holy fane
Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.

"The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,
Are they still such as once they were,
Or is the dreary change in me?"

Providence, in its mercy, did not suffer the shattered frame long to outlive the glorious spirit which had informed it. He breathed his last on the 21st of September, 1832. His remains were deposited, as he had always desired, in the hoary abbey of Dryburgh, and the pilgrim from many a distant clime shall repair to the consecrated spot

so long as the reverence for exalted genius and worth shall survive in the human heart.

This sketch, brief as we could make it, of the literary history of Sir Walter Scott, has extended so far as to leave but little space for—what Lockhart's volumes afford ample materials for—his personal character. Take it for all and all, it is not too much to say that this character is probably the most remarkable on record. There is no man of historical celebrity that we now recall, who combined in so eminent a degree the highest qualities of the moral, the intellectual, and the physical. He united in his own character what hitherto had been found incompatible. Though a poet, and living in an ideal world, he was an exact, methodical man of business; though achieving with the most wonderful facility of genius, he was patient and laborious; a mousing antiquarian, yet with the most active interest in the present and whatever was going on around him; with a strong turn for a roving life and military adventure, he was yet chained to his desk more hours, at some periods of his life, than a monkish recluse; a man with a heart as capacious as his head; a Tory, brimful of Jacobitism, yet full of sympathy and unaffected familiarity with all classes, even the humblest; a successful author, without pedantry and without conceit; one, indeed, at the head of the republic of letters, and yet with a lower estimate of letters, as compared with other intellectual pursuits, than was ever hazarded before.

The first quality of his character, or, rather, that which forms the basis of it, as of all great char-

acters, was his energy. We see it, in his early youth, triumphing over the impediments of nature, and, in spite of lameness, making him conspicuous in every sort of athletic exercise,—clambering up dizzy precipices, wading through treacherous fords, and performing feats of pedestrianism that make one's joints ache to read of. As he advanced in life, we see the same force of purpose turned to higher objects. A striking example occurs in his organization of the journals and the publishing house in opposition to Constable. In what Herculean drudgery did not this latter business, in which he undertook to supply matter for the nimble press of Ballantyne, involve him! while, in addition to his own concerns, he had to drag along by his solitary momentum a score of heavier undertakings, that led Lockhart to compare him to a steam-engine with a train of coal-wagons hitched to it. "Yes," said Scott, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe (for they were felling larches), "and there was a cursed lot of dung-carts too."

We see the same powerful energies triumphing over disease at a later period, when nothing but a resolution to get the better of it enabled him to do so. "Be assured," he remarked to Mr. Gillies, "that if pain could have prevented my application to literary labor, not a page of Ivanhoe would have been written. Now, if I had given way to mere feelings, and ceased to work, it is a question whether the disorder might not have taken a deeper root, and become incurable." But the most extraordinary instance of this trait is the readiness with

which he assumed and the spirit with which he carried through, till his mental strength broke down under it, the gigantic task imposed on him by the failure of Constable.

It mattered little what the nature of the task was, whether it were organizing an opposition to a politieal faction, or a troop of cavalry to resist invasion, or a medley of wild Highlanders or Edinburgh cockneys to make up a royal puppet-show—a loyal celebration—for " His Most Sacred Majesty," he was the master-spirit that gave the cue to the whole *dramatis personæ*. This potent impulse showed itself in the thoroughness with which he prescribed not merely the general orders, but the execution of the minutest details, in his own person. Thus all around him was the creation, as it were, of his individual exertion. His lands waved with forests planted with his own hands, and, in process of time, cleared by his own hands. He did not lay the stones in mortar, exactly, for his whimsical castle, but he seems to have superintended the operation from the foundation to the battlements. The antique relics, the curious works of art, the hangings and furniture, even, with which his halls were decorated, were specially contrived or selected by him; and, to read his letters at this time to his friend Terry, one might fancy himself perusing the correspondence of an upholsterer, so exact and technical is he in his instructions. We say this not in disparagement of his great qualities. It is only the more extraordinary; for, while he stooped to such trifles, he was equally thorough in matters of the highest moment. It was a trait of character.

Another quality, which, like the last, seems to have given the tone to his character, was his social or benevolent feelings. His heart was an unfailing fountain, which not merely the distresses but the joys of his fellow-creatures made to flow like water. In early life, and possibly sometimes in later, high spirits and a vigorous constitution led him occasionally to carry his social propensities into convivial excess; but he never was in danger of the habitual excess to which a vulgar mind—and sometimes, alas! one more finely tuned—abandons itself. With all his conviviality, it was not the sensual relish, but the social, which acted on him. He was neither *gourmé* nor *gourmand;* but his social meetings were endeared to him by the free interchange of kindly feelings with his friends. La Bruyère says (and it is odd he should have found it out in Louis the Fourteenth's court), "the heart has more to do than the head with the pleasures, or, rather, promoting the pleasures, of society;" "Un homme est d'un meilleur commerce dans la société par le cœur que par l'esprit." If report—the report of travellers—be true, we Americans, at least the New Englanders, are too much perplexed with the cares and crosses of life to afford many genuine specimens of this *bonhommie.* However this may be, we all, doubtless, know some such character, whose shining face, the index of a cordial heart, radiant with beneficent pleasure, diffuses its own exhilarating glow wherever it appears. Rarely, indeed, is this precious quality found united with the most exalted intellect. Whether it be that Nature, chary of her

gifts, does not care to shower too many of them on one head, or that the public admiration has led the man of intellect to set too high a value on himself, or at least his own pursuits, to take an interest in the inferior concerns of others, or that the fear of compromising his dignity puts him "on points" with those who approach him, or whether, in truth, the very magnitude of his own reputation throws a freezing shadow over us little people in his neighborhood,—whatever be the cause, it is too true that the highest powers of mind are very often deficient in the only one which can make the rest of much worth in society,—the power of pleasing.

Scott was not one of these little great. His was not one of those dark-lantern visages which concentrate all their light on their own path and are black as midnight to all about them. He had a ready sympathy, a word of contagious kindness or cordial greeting, for all. His manners, too, were of a kind to dispel the icy reserve and awe which his great name was calculated to inspire. His frank address was a sort of *open sesame* to every heart. He did not deal in sneers, the poisoned weapons which come not from the head, as the man who launches them is apt to think, but from an acid heart, or, perhaps, an acid stomach, a very common laboratory of such small artillery. Neither did Scott amuse the company with parliamentary harangues or metaphysical disquisitions. His conversation was of the narrative kind, not formal, but as casually suggested by some passing circumstance or topic, and thrown in by way of illustration. He did not repeat himself, however,

but continued to give his anecdotes such variations, by rigging them out in a new "cocked hat and walking-cane," as he called it, that they never tired like the thrice-told tale of a chronic *raconteur*. He allowed others, too, to take their turn, and thought with the Dean of St. Patrick's:

> "Carve to all, but just enough;
> Let them neither starve nor stuff;
> And, that you may have your due,
> Let your neighbors carve for you."

He relished a good joke, from whatever quarter it came, and was not over-dainty in his manner of testifying his satisfaction. "In the full tide of mirth, he did indeed laugh the heart's laugh," says Mr. Adolphus. "Give me an honest laugher," said Scott himself, on another occasion, when a buckram man of fashion had been paying him a visit at Abbotsford. His manners, free from affectation or artifice of any sort, exhibited the spontaneous movements of a kind disposition, subject to those rules of good breeding which Nature herself might have dictated. In this way he answered his own purpose admirably as a painter of character, by putting every man in good humor with himself, in the same manner as a cunning portrait-painter amuses his sitters with such store of fun and anecdote as may throw them off their guard and call out the happiest expressions of their countenances.

Scott, in his wide range of friends and companions, does not seem to have been over-fastidious. In the instance of John Ballantyne, it has exposed him to some censure. In truth, a more worthless

fellow never hung on the skirts of a great man; for he did not take the trouble to throw a decent veil over the grossest excesses. But then he had been the school-boy friend of Scott; had grown up with him in a sort of dependence,—a relation which begets a kindly feeling in the party that confers the benefits, at least. How strong it was in him may be inferred from his remark at his funeral. "I feel," said Scott, mournfully, as the solemnity was concluded, "I feel as if there would be less sunshine for me from this day forth." It must be admitted, however, that his intimacy with little Rigdumfunnidos, whatever apology it may find in Scott's heart, was not very creditable to his taste.

But the benevolent principle showed itself not merely in words, but in the more substantial form of actions. How many are the cases recorded of indigent merit which he drew from obscurity and almost warmed into life by his own generous and most delicate patronage! Such were the cases, among others, of Leyden, Weber, Hogg. How often and how cheerfully did he supply such literary contributions as were solicited by his friends —and they taxed him pretty liberally—amid all the pressure of business, and at the height of his fame, when his hours were golden hours to him! In the more vulgar and easier forms of charity he did not stint his hand, though, instead of direct assistance, he preferred to enable others to assist themselves,—in this way fortifying their good habits and relieving them from the sense of personal degradation.

But the place where his benevolent impulses found their proper theatre for expansion was his own home, surrounded by a happy family, and dispensing all the hospitalities of a great feudal proprietor. "There are many good things in life," he says, in one of his letters, "whatever satirists and misanthropes may say to the contrary; but probably the best of all, next to a conscience void of offence (without which, by-the-by, they can hardly exist), are the quiet exercise and enjoyment of the social feelings, in which we are at once happy ourselves and the cause of happiness to them who are dearest to us." Every page of the work, almost, shows us how intimately he blended himself with the pleasures and the pursuits of his own family, watched over the education of his children, shared in their rides, their rambles and sports, losing no opportunity of kindling in their young minds a love of virtue, and honorable principles of action. He delighted, too, to collect his tenantry around him, multiplying holidays, when young and old might come together under his roof-tree, when the jolly punch was liberally dispensed by himself and his wife among the elder people, and the *Hogmanay* cakes and pennies were distributed among the young ones, while his own children mingled in the endless reels and hornpipes on the earthen floor, and the *laird* himself, mixing in the groups of merry faces, had "his private joke for every old wife or 'gausie carle,' his arch compliment for the ear of every bonny lass, and his hand and his blessing for the head of every little *Eppie Daidle* from Abbotstown or Broomylees."

" Sir Walter," said one of his old retainers, " speaks to every man as if he were his blood relation." No wonder that they should have returned this feeling with something warmer than blood relations usually do. Mr. Gillies tells an anecdote of the Ettrick Shepherd, showing how deep a root such feelings, notwithstanding his rather odd way of expressing them sometimes, had taken in his honest nature. " Mr. James Ballantyne, walking home with him one evening from Scott's, where, by-the-by, Hogg had gone uninvited, happened to observe, ' I do not at all like this illness of Scott's. I have often seen him look jaded of late, and am afraid it is serious.' ' Haud your tongue, or I'll gar you measure your length on the pavement!' replied Hogg. ' You fause, down-hearted loon that you are; ye daur to speak as if Scott were on his death-bed! It cannot be—it *must* not be! I will not suffer you to speak that gait.' The sentiment was like that of Uncle Toby at the bedside of Le Fevre; and, at these words, the Shepherd's voice became suppressed with emotion."

But Scott's sympathies were not confined to his species; and if he treated them like blood relations, he treated his brute followers like personal friends. Every one remembers old Maida and faithful Camp, the " dear old friend," whose loss cost him a dinner. Mr. Gillies tells us that he went into his study on one occasion, when he was winding off his " Vision of Don Roderick." " ' Look here,' said the poet, ' I have just begun to copy over the rhymes that you heard to-day and applauded so much. Return to supper, if you can; only don't

be late, as you perceive we keep early hours, and Wallace will not suffer me to rest after six in the morning. Come, good dog, and help the poet.' At this hint, Wallace seated himself upright on a chair next his master, who offered him a newspaper, which he directly seized, looking very wise, and holding it firmly and contentedly in his mouth. Scott looked at him with great satisfaction, for he was excessively fond of dogs. 'Very well,' said he; '*now* we shall get on.' And so I left them abruptly, knowing that my 'absence would be the best company.'" This fellowship extended much farther than to his canine followers, of which, including hounds, terriers, mastiffs, and mongrels, he had certainly a goodly assortment. We find, also, Grimalkin installed in a responsible post in the library, and, out of doors, pet hens, pet donkeys, and—tell it not in Judæa—a pet pig!

Scott's sensibilities, though easily moved and widely diffused, were warm and sincere. None shared more cordially in the troubles of his friends; but on all such occasions, with a true manly feeling, he thought less of mere sympathy than of the most effectual way for mitigating their sorrows. After a touching allusion in one of his epistles to his dear friend Erskine's death, he concludes, "I must turn to and see what can be done about getting some pension for his daughters." In another passage, which may remind one of some of the exquisite touches in Jeremy Taylor, he indulges in the following beautiful strain of philosophy: "The last three or four years have swept away more than half the friends with whom I lived in

habits of great intimacy. So it must be with us

'When ance life's day draws near the gloamin','

and yet we proceed with our plantations and plans as if any tree but the sad cypress would accompany us to the grave, where our friends have gone before us. It is the way of the world, however, and must be so; otherwise life would be spent in unavailing mourning for those whom we have lost. It is better to enjoy the society of those who remain to us." His well-disciplined heart seems to have confessed the influence of this philosophy in his most ordinary relations. "I can't help it," was a favorite maxim of his, "and therefore will not think about it; for that, at least, I *can* help."

Among his admirable qualities must not be omitted a certain worldly sagacity or shrewdness, which is expressed as strongly as any individual trait can be in some of his portraits, especially in the excellent one of him by Leslie. Indeed, his countenance would seem to exhibit, ordinarily, much more of Dandie Dinmont's benevolent shrewdness than of the eye glancing from earth to heaven which in fancy we assign to the poet, and which, in some moods, must have been his. This trait may be readily discerned in his business transactions, which he managed with perfect knowledge of character as well as of his own rights. No one knew better than he the market value of an article; and, though he underrated his literary wares as to their mere literary rank, he set as high a money value on them and made as sharp a bargain as any of the *trade* could have done. In his business concerns,

indeed, he managed rather too much, or, to speak more correctly, was too fond of mixing up mystery in his transactions, which, like most mysteries, proved of little service to their author. Scott's correspondence, especially with his son, affords obvious examples of shrewdness, in the advice he gives as to his deportment in the novel situations and society into which the young cornet was thrown. Occasionally, in the cautious hints about etiquette and social observances, we may be reminded of that ancient "arbiter elegantiarum," Lord Chesterfield, though it must be confessed there is throughout a high moral tone, which the noble lord did not very scrupulously affect.

Another feature in Scott's character was his loyalty, which some people would extend into a more general deference to rank not royal. We do certainly meet with a tone of deference, occasionally, to the privileged orders (or, rather, privileged persons, as the king, or his own chief, for to the mass of stars and garters he showed no such respect) which falls rather unpleasantly on the ear of a republican. But, independently of the feelings which rightfully belonged to him as the subject of a monarchy, and without which he must have been a false-hearted subject, his own were heightened by a poetical coloring that mingled in his mind even with much more vulgar relations of life. At the opening of the regalia in Holyrood House, when the honest burgomaster deposited the crown on the head of one of the young ladies present, the good man probably saw nothing more in the dingy diadem than we should have seen,—a headpiece for

a set of men no better than himself, and, if the old adage of a "dead lion" holds true, not quite so good. But to Scott's imagination other views were unfolded. "A thousand years their cloudy wings expanded" around him, and in the dim visions of distant times he beheld the venerable line of monarchs who had swayed the councils of his country in peace and led her armies in battle. The "golden round" became in his eye the symbol of his nation's glory; and, as he heaved a heavy oath from his heart, he left the room in agitation, from which he did not speedily recover. There was not a spice of affectation in this,—for who ever accused Scott of affectation?—but there was a good deal of poetry, the poetry of sentiment.

We have said that this feeling mingled in the more common concerns of his life. His cranium, indeed, to judge from his busts, must have exhibited a strong development of the organ of veneration. He regarded with reverence every thing connected with antiquity. His establishment was on the feudal scale; his house was fashioned more after the feudal ages than his own; and even in the ultimate distribution of his fortune, although the circumstance of having made it himself relieved him from any legal necessity of contravening the suggestions of natural justice, he showed such attachment to the old aristocratic usage as to settle nearly the whole of it on his eldest son.

The influence of this poetic sentiment is discernible in his most trifling acts, in his tastes, his love of the arts, his social habits. His museum, house, and grounds were adorned with relics curious not

so much from their workmanship as their historic associations. It was the ancient fountain from Edinburgh, the Tolbooth lintels, the blunderbuss and spleughan of Rob Roy, the drinking-cup of Prince Charlie, or the like. It was the same in the arts. The tunes he loved were not the refined and complex melodies of Italy, but the simple notes of his native minstrelsy, from the bagpipe of John of Skye, or from the harp of his own lovely and accomplished daughter. So, also, in painting. It was not the masterly designs of the great Flemish and Italian schools that adorned his walls, but some portrait of Claverhouse, or of Queen Mary, or of "glorious old John." In architecture we see the same spirit in the singular "romance of stone and lime," which may be said to have been his own device, down to the minutest details of its finishing. We see it again in the joyous celebrations of his feudal tenantry, the good old festivals, the Hogmanay, the Kirn, etc., long fallen into desuetude, when the old Highland piper sounded the same wild pibroch that had so often summoned the clans together, for war or for wassail, among the fastnesses of the mountains. To the same source, in fine, may be traced the feelings of superstition which seemed to hover round Scott's mind like some "strange, mysterious dream," giving a romantic coloring to his conversation and his writings, but rarely, if ever, influencing his actions. It was a poetic sentiment.

Scott was a Tory to the backbone. Had he come into the world half a century sooner, he would, no doubt, have made a figure under the banner of the

Pretender. He was at no great pains to disguise his political creed; witness his jolly drinking-song on the acquittal of Lord Melville. This was verse; but his prose is not much more qualified. "As for Whiggery in general," he says, in one of his letters, "I can only say that, as no man can be said to be utterly overset until his rump has been higher than his head, so I cannot read in history of any free state which has been brought to slavery until the rascal and uninstructed populace had had their short hour of anarchical government, which naturally leads to the stern repose of military despotism. . . . .With these convictions, I am very jealous of Whiggery under all modifications, and I must say my acquaintance with the total want of principle in some of its warmest professors does not tend to recommend it." With all this, however, his Toryism was not, practically, of that sort which blunts a man's sensibilities for those who are not of the same porcelain clay with himself. No man, Whig or Radical, ever had less of this pretension, or treated his inferiors with greater kindness, and even familiarity,—a circumstance noticed by every visitor at his hospitable mansion who saw him strolling round his grounds, taking his pinch of snuff out of the mull of some "gray-haired old hedger," or leaning on honest Tom Purdie's shoulder and taking sweet counsel as to the right method of thinning a plantation. But, with all this familiarity, no man was better served by his domestics. It was the service of love, the only service that power cannot command and money cannot buy.

Akin to the feelings of which we have been

speaking was the truly chivalrous sense of honor which stamped his whole conduct. We do not mean that Hotspur honor which is roused only by the drum and fife,—though he says of himself, "I like the sound of a drum as well as Uncle Toby ever did,"—but that honor which is deep-seated in the heart of every true gentleman, shrinking with sensitive delicacy from the least stain, or imputation of a stain, on his faith. "If we lose every thing else," writes he, on a trying occasion, to a friend who was not so nice in this particular, "we will at least keep our honor unblemished." It reminds one of the pithy epistle of a kindred chivalrous spirit, Francis the First, to his mother, from the unlucky field of Pavia: "Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur." Scott's latter years furnished a noble commentary on the sincerity of his manly principles.

Little is said directly of his religious sentiments in the biography. They seem to have harmonized well with his political. He was a member of the English Church, a stanch champion of established forms, and a sturdy enemy to every thing that savored of the sharp tang of Puritanism. On this ground, indeed, the youthful Samson used to wrestle manfully with worthy Dominie Mitchell, who, no doubt, furnished many a screed of doctrine for the Rev. Peter Poundtext, Master Nehemiah Holdenough, and other lights of the Covenant. Scott was no friend to cant under any form. But, whatever were his speculative opinions, in practice his heart overflowed with that charity which is the life-spring of our religion; and whenever he takes

occasion to allude to the subject directly he testifies a deep reverence for the truths of revelation, as well as for its Divine original.

Whatever estimate be formed of Scott's moral qualities, his intellectual were of a kind which well entitled him to the epithet conferred on Lope de Vega, "monstruo de naturaleza" (a miracle of nature). His mind scarcely seemed to be subjected to the same laws that control the rest of his species. His memory, as is usual, was the first of his powers fully developed. While an urchin at school, he could repeat whole cantos, he says, of Ossian and of Spenser. In riper years we are constantly meeting with similar feats of his achievement. Thus, on one occasion, he repeated the whole of a poem in some penny magazine, incidentally alluded to, which he had not seen since he was a school-boy. On another, when the Ettrick Shepherd was trying ineffectually to fish up from his own recollections some scraps of a ballad he had himself manufactured years before, Scott called to him, "Take your pencil, Jemmy, and I will tell it to you, word for word;" and he accordingly did so. But it is needless to multiply examples of feats so startling as to look almost like the tricks of a conjurer.

What is most extraordinary is, that while he acquired with such facility that the bare perusal, or the repetition of a thing once to him, was sufficient, he yet retained it with the greatest pertinacity. Other men's memories are so much jostled in the rough and tumble of life that most of the facts get sifted out nearly as fast as they are put in; so that

we are in the same dilemma with those unlucky daughters of Danaus, of school-boy memory, obliged to spend the greater part of the time in replenishing. But Scott's memory seemed to be hermetically sealed, suffering nothing once fairly in to leak out again. This was of immense service to him when he took up the business of authorship, as his whole multifarious stock of facts, whether from books or observation, became, in truth, his stock in trade, ready furnished to his hands. This may explain in part—though it is not less marvellous—the cause of his rapid execution of works often replete with rare and curious information. The labor, the preparation, had been already completed. His whole life had been a business of preparation. When he ventured, as in the case of "Rokeby" and of "Quentin Durward," on ground with which he had not been familiar, we see how industriously he set about new acquisitions.

In most of the prodigies of memory which we have ever known, the overgrowth of that faculty seems to have been attained at the expense of all the others; but in Scott the directly opposite power of the imagination, the inventive power, was equally strongly developed, and at the same early age; for we find him renowned for story-craft while at school. How many a delightful fiction, warm with the flush of ingenuous youth, did he not throw away on the ears of thoughtless childhood, which, had they been duly registered, might now have amused children of a larger growth? We have seen Scott's genius in its prime and its decay. The frolic graces of childhood are alone wanting.

The facility with which he threw his ideas into language was also remarked very early. One of his first ballads, and a long one, was dashed off at the dinner-table. His "Lay" was written at the rate of a canto a week. "Waverley," or, rather, the last two volumes of it, cost the evenings of a summer month. Who that has ever read the account can forget the movements of that mysterious hand, as described by the two students from the window of a neighboring attic, throwing off sheet after sheet, with untiring rapidity, of the pages destined to immortality? Scott speaks pleasantly enough of this marvellous facility in a letter to his friend Morritt: "When once I set my pen to the paper, it will walk fast enough. I am sometimes tempted to leave it alone, and see whether it will not write as well without the assistance of my head as with it. A hopeful prospect for the reader."

As to the time and place of composition, he appears to have been nearly indifferent. He possessed entire power of abstraction, and it mattered little whether he were nailed to his clerk's desk, under the drowsy eloquence of some long-winded barrister, or dashing his horse into the surf on Portobello sands, or rattling in a post-chaise, or amid the hum of guests in his overflowing halls at Abbotsford,—it mattered not; the same well-adjusted little packet, "nicely corded and sealed," was sure to be ready, at the regular time, for the Edinburgh mail. His own account of his composition to a friend, who asked when he found time for it, is striking enough. "Oh," said Scott, "I

lie *simmering* over things for an hour or so before I get up, and there's the time I am dressing to overhaul my half-sleeping, half-waking *projet de chapitre;* and when I get the paper before me, it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a doze in the plantations, and while Tom marks out a dike or a drain as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain riggs in some other world." Never did this sort of simmering produce such a splendid bill of fare.

The quality of the material, under such circumstances, is, in truth, the great miracle of the whole. The execution of so much work, as a mere feat of penmanship, would undoubtedly be very extraordinary, but, as a mere scrivener's miracle, would be hardly worth recording. It is a sort of miracle that is every day performing under our own eyes, as it were, by Messrs. James, Bulwer, & Co., who, in all the various staples of "comedy, history, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral," etc., supply their own market, and ours too, with all that can be wanted. In Spain, and in Italy also, we may find abundance of *improvvisatori* and *improvvisatrici,* who perform miracles of the same sort, in verse too, in languages whose vowel terminations make it very easy for the thoughts to tumble into rhyme without any malice prepense. Sir Stamford Raffles, in his account of Java, tells us of a splendid avenue of trees before his house, which in the course of a year shot up to the height of forty feet. But who shall compare the brief, transitory splendors of a fungous vegetation with the mighty monarch of the forest, sending his roots

deep into the heart of the earth, and his branches, amid storm and sunshine, to the heavens? And is not the latter the true emblem of Scott? For who can doubt that his prose creations, at least, will gather strength with time, living on through succeeding generations, even when the language in which they are written, like those of Greece and Rome, shall cease to be a living language?

The only writer deserving, in these respects, to be named with Scott, is Lope de Vega, who in his own day held as high a rank in the republic of letters as our great contemporary. The beautiful dramas which he threw off for the entertainment of the capital, and whose success drove Cervantes from the stage, outstripped the abilities of an amanuensis to copy. His intimate friend Montalvan, one of the most popular and prolific authors of the time, tells us that he undertook with Lope once to supply the theatre with a comedy—in verse, and in three acts, as the Spanish dramas usually were—at a very short notice. In order to get through his half as soon as his partner, he rose by two in the morning, and at eleven had completed it; an extraordinary feat, certainly, since a play extended to between thirty and forty pages, of a hundred lines each. Walking into the garden, he found his brother poet pruning an orange-tree. "Well, how do you get on?" said Montalvan. "Very well," answered Lope. "I rose betimes,—at five,—and, after I had got through, eat my breakfast; since which I have written a letter of fifty triplets, and watered the whole of the garden, which has tired me a good deal."

But a little arithmetic will best show the comparative fertility of Scott and Lope de Vega. It is so germane to the present matter that we shall make no apology for transcribing here some computations from our last July number; and as few of our readers, we suspect, have the air-tight memory of Sir Walter, we doubt not that enough of it has escaped them by this time to excuse us from equipping it with one of those "cocked hats and walking-sticks" with which he furbished up an old story.

"It is impossible to state the results of Lope de Vega's labors in any form that will not powerfully strike the imagination. Thus, he has left twenty-one million three hundred thousand verses in print, besides a mass of manuscript. He furnished the theatre, according to the statement of his intimate friend Montalvan, with eighteen hundred regular plays and four hundred *autos*, or religious dramas, —all acted. He composed, according to his own statement, more than one hundred comedies in the almost incredible space of twenty-four hours each; and a comedy averaged between two and three thousand verses, great part of them rhymed, and interspersed with sonnets and other more difficult forms of versification. He lived seventy-two years; and, supposing him to have employed fifty of that period in composition, although he filled a variety of engrossing vocations during that time, he must have averaged a play a week, to say nothing of twenty-one volumes, quarto, of miscellaneous works, including five epics, written in his leisure moments, and all now in print!

"The only achievements we can recall in literary history bearing any resemblance to, though falling far short of this, are those of our illustrious contemporary Sir Walter Scott. The complete edition of his works, recently advertised by Murray, with the addition of two volumes of which Murray has not the copyright, probably contains ninety volumes, small octavo. [To these should farther be added a large supply of matter for the Edinburgh Annual Register, as well as other anonymous contributions.] Of these, forty-eight volumes of novels, and twenty-one of history and biography, were produced between 1814 and 1831, or in seventeen years. These would give an average of four volumes a year, or one for every three months during the whole of that period; to which must be added twenty-one volumes of poetry and prose, previously published. The mere mechanical execution of so much work, both in his case and Lope de Vega's, would seem to be scarce possible in the limits assigned. Scott, too, was as variously occupied in other ways as his Spanish rival, and probably, from the social hospitality of his life, spent a much larger portion of his time in no literary occupation at all."

Of all the wonderful dramatic creations of Lope de Vega's genius, what now remains? Two or three plays only keep possession of the stage, and few, very few, are still read with pleasure in the closet. They have never been collected into a uniform edition, and are now met with in scattered sheets only on the shelves of some mousing bookseller, or collected in miscellaneous parcels in the libraries of the curious.

Scott, with all his facility of execution, had none of that pitiable affectation sometimes found in men of genius, who think that the possession of this quality may dispense with regular, methodical habits of study. He was most economical of time. He did not, like Voltaire, speak of it as "a terrible thing that so much time should be wasted in talking." He was too little of a pedant, and far too benevolent, not to feel that there are other objects worth living for than mere literary fame; but he grudged the waste of time on merely frivolous and heartless objects. "As for dressing when we are quite alone," he remarked one day to Mr. Gillies, whom he had taken home with him to a family dinner, "it is out of the question. Life is not long enough for such fiddle-faddle." In the early part of his life he worked late at night, but subsequently, from a conviction of the superior healthiness of early rising, as well as the desire to secure, at all hazards, a portion of the day for literary labor, he rose at five the year round; no small effort, as any one will admit who has seen the pain and difficulty which a regular bird of night finds in reconciling his eyes to daylight. He was scrupulously exact, moreover, in the distribution of his hours. In one of his letters to his friend Terry, the player, replete, as usual, with advice that seems to flow equally from the head and the heart, he says, in reference to the practice of *dawdling* away one's time, "A habit of the mind it is which is very apt to beset men of intellect and talent, especially when their time is not regularly filled up, but left to their own arrange-

ment. But it is like the ivy round the oak, and ends by limiting, if it does not destroy, the power of manly and necessary exertion. I must love a man so well, to whom I offer such a word of advice, that I will not apologize for it, but expect to hear you are become *as regular as a Dutch clock, —hours, quarters, minutes, all marked and appropriated.*" With the same emphasis he inculcates the like habits on his son. If any man might dispense with them, it was surely Scott. But he knew that without them the greatest powers of mind will run to waste, and water but the desert.

Some of the literary opinions of Scott are singular, considering, too, the position he occupied in the world of letters. " I promise you," he says, in an epistle to an old friend, " my oaks will outlast my laurels; and I pique myself more on my compositions for manure than on any other compositions to which I was ever accessory." This may seem *badinage;* but he repeatedly, both in writing and conversation, places literature, as a profession, below other intellectual professions, and especially the military. The Duke of Wellington, the representative of the last, seems to have drawn from him a very extraordinary degree of deference, which we cannot but think smacks a little of that strong relish for gunpowder which he avows in himself.

It is not very easy to see on what this low estimate of literature rested. As a profession, it has too little in common with more active ones to afford much ground for running a parallel. The soldier has to do with externals; and his contests

and triumphs are over matter in its various forms, whether of man or material nature. The poet deals with the bodiless forms of air, of fancy lighter than air. His business is contemplative; the other's is active, and depends for its success on strong moral energy and presence of mind. He must, indeed, have genius of the highest order to effect his own combinations, anticipate the movements of his enemy, and dart with eagle eye on his vulnerable point. But who shall say that this practical genius, if we may so term it, is to rank higher in the scale than the creative power of the poet, the spark from the mind of divinity itself?

The orator might seem to afford better ground for comparison, since, though his theatre of action is abroad, he may be said to work with much the same tools as the writer. Yet how much of his success depends on qualities other than intellectual! "Action," said the father of eloquence, "action, action, are the three most essential things to an orator." How much depends on the look, the gesture, the magical tones of voice, modulated to the passions he has stirred, and how much on the contagious sympathies of the audience itself, which drown every thing like criticism in the overwhelming tide of emotion! If anyone would know how much, let him, after patiently standing

> "till his feet throb,
> And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
> Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,"

read the same speech in the columns of a morning newspaper or in the well-concocted report of the orator himself. The productions of the writer are

subjected to a fiercer ordeal. He has no excited sympathies of numbers to hurry his readers along over his blunders. He is scanned in the calm silence of the closet. Every flower of fancy seems here to wither under the rude breath of criticism; every link in the chain of argument is subjected to the touch of prying scrutiny, and if there be the least flaw in it it is sure to be detected. There is no tribunal so stern as the secret tribunal of a man's own closet, far removed from all the sympathetic impulses of humanity. Surely there is no form in which *intellect* can be exhibited to the world so completely stripped of all adventitious aids as the form of written composition. But, says the practical man, let us estimate things by their utility. "You talk of the poems of Homer," said a mathematician, "but, after all, what do they *prove?*" A question which involves an answer somewhat too voluminous for the tail of an article. But if the poems of Homer were, as Heeren asserts, the principal bond which held the Grecian states together and gave them a national feeling, they "prove" more than all the arithmeticians of Greece—and there were many cunning ones in it—ever proved. The results of military skill are indeed obvious. The soldier, by a single victory, enlarges the limits of an empire; he may do more,—he may achieve the liberties of a nation, or roll back the tide of barbarism ready to overwhelm them. Wellington was placed in such a position, and nobly did he do his work; or, rather, he was placed at the head of such a gigantic moral and physical apparatus as enabled him to do it. With his own

unassisted strength, of course, he could have done nothing. But it is on his own solitary resources that the great writer is to rely. And yet who shall say that the triumphs of Wellington have been greater than those of Scott, whose works are familiar as household words to every fireside in his own land, from the castle to the cottage,—have crossed oceans and deserts, and, with healing on their wings, found their way to the remotest regions,—have helped to form the character, until his own mind may be said to be incorporated into those of hundreds of thousands of his fellow-men? Who is there that has not, at some time or other, felt the heaviness of his heart lightened, his pains mitigated, and his bright moments of life made still brighter by the magical touches of his genius? And shall we speak of his victories as less real, less serviceable to humanity, less truly glorious than those of the greatest captain of his day? The triumphs of the warrior are bounded by the narrow theatre of his own age; but those of a Scott or a Shakespeare will be renewed with greater and greater lustre in ages yet unborn, when the victorious chieftain shall be forgotten, or shall live only in the song of the minstrel and the page of the chronicler.

But, after all, this sort of parallel is not very gracious nor very philosophical, and, to say truth, is somewhat foolish. We have been drawn into it by the not random, but very deliberate and, in our poor judgment, very disparaging estimate by Scott of his own vocation; and, as we have taken the trouble to write it, our readers will excuse us

from blotting it out. There is too little ground for the respective parties to stand on for a parallel. As to the pedantic *cui bono* standard, it is impossible to tell the final issues of a single act; how can we then hope to those of a course of action? As for the *honor* of different vocations, there never was a truer sentence than the stale one of Pope,—stale now, because it is so true,—

"Act well your part—there all the honor lies."

And it is the just boast of our own country that in no civilized nation is the force of this philanthropic maxim so nobly illustrated as in ours,—thanks to our glorious institutions.

A great cause, probably, of Scott's low estimate of letters was the facility with which he wrote. What costs us little we are apt to prize little. If diamonds were as common as pebbles, and gold-dust as any other, who would stoop to gather them? It was the prostitution of his muse, by-the-by, for this same gold-dust, which brought a sharp rebuke on the poet from Lord Byron, in his "English Bards:"

"For this we spurn Apollo's venal son;"

a coarse cut, and the imputation about as true as most satire,—that is, not true at all. This was indited in his lordship's earlier days, when he most chivalrously disclaimed all purpose of bartering his rhymes for gold. He lived long enough, however, to weigh his literary wares in the same money-balance used by more vulgar manufacturers; and, in truth, it would be ridiculous if the produce of the

brain should not bring its price in this form as well as any other. There is little danger, we imagine, of finding too much gold in the bowels of Parnassus.

Scott took a more sensible view of things. In a letter to Ellis, written soon after the publication of "The Minstrelsy," he observes, "People may say this and that of the pleasure of fame, or of profit, as a motive of writing; I think the only pleasure is in the actual exertion and research, and I would no more write on any other terms than I would hunt merely to dine upon hare soup. At the same time, if credit and profit came unlooked for, I would no more quarrel with them than with the soup." Even this declaration was somewhat more magnanimous than was warranted by his subsequent conduct. The truth is, he soon found out, especially after the Waverley vein had opened, that he had hit on a gold-mine. The prodigious returns he got gave the whole thing the aspect of a speculation. Every new work was an adventure, and the proceeds naturally suggested the indulgence of the most extravagant schemes of expense, which, in their turn, stimulated him to fresh efforts. In this way the "profits" became, whatever they might have been once, a principal incentive to, as they were the recompense of, exertion. His productions were cash articles, and were estimated by him more on the Hudibrastic rule of "the real worth of a thing" than by any fanciful standard of fame. He bowed with deference to the judgment of the booksellers, and trimmed his sails dexterously as the "aura popularis" shifted. "If it's

na weil bobbit," he writes to his printer, on turning out a less lucky novel, " we'll bobbit again." His muse was of that school who seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number. We can hardly imagine him invoking her like Milton:

> " Still govern thou my song,
> Urania, and fit audience find, though few."

Still less can we imagine him, like the blind old bard, feeding his soul with visions of posthumous glory, and spinning out epics for five pounds apiece.

It is singular that Scott, although he set as high a money value on his productions as the most enthusiastic of the " trade " could have done, in a literary view should have held them so cheap. " Whatever others may be," he said, " I have never been a partisan of my own poetry; as John Wilkes declared that, ' in the height of his success, he had himself never been a Wilkite.' " Considering the poet's popularity, this was but an indifferent compliment to the taste of his age. With all this disparagement of his own productions, however, Scott was not insensible to criticism. He says somewhere that, " if he had been conscious of a single vulnerable point in himself, he would not have taken up the business of writing;" but on another occasion he writes, " I make it a rule never to read the attacks made upon me;" and Captain Hall remarks, " He never reads the criticisms on his books; this I know from the most unquestionable authority. Praise, he says, gives him no pleasure, and censure annoys him." Madame de Graf-

figny says, also, of Voltaire, "that he was altogether indifferent to praise, but the least word from his enemies drove him crazy." Yet both these authors banqueted on the sweets of panegyric as much as any who ever lived. They were in the condition of an epicure whose palate has lost its relish for the dainty fare in which it has been so long revelling, without becoming less sensible to the annoyances of sharper and coarser flavors. It may afford some consolation to humble mediocrity, to the less fortunate votaries of the muse, that those who have reached the summit of Parnassus are not much more contented with their condition than those who are scrambling among the bushes at the bottom of the mountain. The fact seems to be, as Scott himself intimates more than once, that the joy is in the chase, whether in the prose or the poetry of life.

But it is high time to terminate our lucubrations, which, however imperfect and unsatisfactory, have already run to a length that must trespass on the patience of the reader. We rise from the perusal of these delightful volumes with the same sort of melancholy feeling with which we wake from a pleasant dream. The concluding volume, of which such ominous presage is given in the last sentence of the fifth, has not yet reached us; but we know enough to anticipate the sad catastrophe it is to unfold of the drama. In those which we have seen, we have beheld a succession of interesting characters come upon the scene and pass away to their long home. "Bright eyes now closed in dust, gay voices forever silenced," seem to haunt us, too, as

we write. The imagination reverts to Abbotsford, —the romantic and once brilliant Abbotsford,— the magical creation of *his* hands. We see its halls radiant with the hospitality of *his* benevolent heart; thronged with pilgrims from every land, assembled to pay homage at the shrine of genius; echoing to the blithe music of those festal holidays when young and old met to renew the usages of the good old times.

"These were its charms, but all these charms are fled."

Its courts are desolate, or trodden only by the foot of the stranger. The stranger sits under the shadows of the trees which his hand planted. The spell of the enchanter is dissolved; his wand is broken; and the mighty minstrel himself now sleeps in the bosom of the peaceful scenes embellished by his taste, and which his genius has made immortal.

CHATEAUBRIAND'S ENGLISH LITERATURE *

(October, 1839)

THERE are few topics of greater attraction, or, when properly treated, of higher importance, than literary history. For what is it but a faithful register of the successive steps by which a nation has advanced in the career of civilization? Civil history records the crimes and the follies, the enterprises, discoveries, and triumphs, it may be, of humanity. But to what do all these tend, or of what moment are they in the eye of the philosopher, except as they accelerate or retard the march of civilization? The history of literature is the history of the human mind. It is, as compared with other histories, the intellectual as distinguished from the material,—the informing spirit, as compared with the outward and visible.

When such a view of the mental progress of a people is combined with individual biography, we have all the materials for the deepest and most varied interest. The life of the man of letters is not always circumscribed by the walls of a cloister, and was not, even in those days when the cloister was the familiar abode of science. The history of Dante and of Petrarch is the best commentary on that of their age. In later times, the man of let-

* "Sketches of English Literature; with Considerations on the Spirit of the Times, Men, and Revolutions. By the Viscount de Chateaubriand." 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1836.

ters has taken part in all the principal concerns of public and social life. But, even when the story is to derive its interest from personal character, what a store of entertainment is supplied by the eccentricities of genius,—the joys and sorrows, not visible to vulgar eyes, but which agitate his finer sensibilities as powerfully as the greatest shocks of worldly fortune would a hardier and less visionary temper! What deeper interest can romance afford than is to be gathered from the melancholy story of Petrarch, Tasso, Alfieri, Rousseau, Byron, Burns, and a crowd of familiar names, whose genius seems to have been given them only to sharpen their sensibility to suffering? What matter if their sufferings were, for the most part, of the imagination? They were not the less real to *them*. They lived in a world of imagination, and, by the gift of genius, unfortunate to its proprietor, have known how, in the language of one of the most unfortunate, "to make madness beautiful" in the eyes of others.

But, notwithstanding the interest and importance of literary history, it has hitherto received but little attention from English writers. No complete survey of the treasures of our native tongue has been yet produced, or even attempted. The earlier periods of the poetical development of the nation have been well illustrated by various antiquarians. Warton has brought the history of poetry down to the season of its first vigorous expansion,—the age of Elizabeth. But he did not penetrate beyond the magnificent vestibule of the temple. Dr. Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" have

done much to supply the deficiency in this department. But much more remains to be done to afford the student any thing like a complete view of the progress of poetry in England. Johnson's work, as every one knows, is conducted on the most capricious and irregular plan. The biographies were dictated by the choice of the bookseller. Some of the most memorable names in British literature are omitted to make way for a host of minor luminaries, whose dim radiance, unassisted by the critic's magnifying lens, would never have penetrated to posterity. The same irregularity is visible in the proportion he has assigned to each of his subjects; the principal figures, or what should have been such, being often thrown into the background to make room for some subordinate person whose story was thought to have more interest.

Besides these defects of plan, the critic was certainly deficient in sensibility to the more delicate, the minor beauties of poetic sentiment. He analyzes verse in the cold-blooded spirit of a chemist, until all the aroma which constituted its principal charm escapes in the decomposition. By this kind of process, some of the finest fancies of the Muse, the lofty dithyrambics of Gray, the ethereal effusions of Collins, and of Milton too, are rendered sufficiently vapid. In this sort of criticism, all the effect that relies on *impressions* goes for nothing. Ideas are alone taken into the account, and all is weighed in the same hard, matter-of-fact scales of common sense, like so much solid prose. What a sorry figure would Byron's Muse make subjected to such an ordeal! The doctor's taste in composi-

tion, to judge from his own style, was not of the highest order. It was a style, indeed, of extraordinary power, suited to the expression of his original thinking, bold, vigorous, and glowing with all the lustre of pointed antithesis. But the brilliancy is cold, and the ornaments are much too florid and overcharged for a graceful effect. When to these minor blemishes we add the graver one of an obliquity of judgment, produced by inveterate political and religious prejudice, which has thrown a shadow over some of the brightest characters subjected to his pencil, we have summed up a fair amount of critical deficiencies. With all this, there is no one of the works of this great and good man in which he has displayed more of the strength of his mighty intellect, shown a more pure and masculine morality, more sound principles of criticism in the abstract, more acute delineation of character, and more gorgeous splendor of diction. His defects, however, such as they are, must prevent his maintaining with posterity that undisputed dictatorship in criticism which was conceded to him in his own day. We must do justice to his errors as well as to his excellences, in order that we may do justice to the characters which have come under his censure. And we must admit that his work, however admirable as a gallery of splendid portraits, is inadequate to convey any thing like a complete or impartial view of English poetry.

The English have made but slender contributions to the history of foreign literatures. The most important, probably, are Roscoe's works, in which literary criticism, though but a subordinate

feature, is the most valuable part of the composition. As to any thing like a general survey of this department, they are wholly deficient. The deficiency, indeed, is likely to be supplied, to a certain extent, by the work of Mr. Hallam, now in progress of publication, the first volume of which —the only one which has yet issued from the press —gives evidence of the same curious erudition, acuteness, honest impartiality, and energy of diction which distinguish the other writings of this eminent scholar. But the extent of his work, limited to four volumes, precludes any thing more than a survey of the most prominent features of the vast subject he has undertaken.

The Continental nations, under serious discouragements, too, have been much more active than the British in this field. The Spaniards can boast a general history of letters, extending to more than twenty volumes in length, and compiled with sufficient impartiality. The Italians have several such. Yet these are the lands of the Inquisition, where reason is hoodwinked and the honest utterance of opinion has been recompensed by persecution, exile, and the stake. How can such a people estimate the character of compositions which, produced under happier institutions, are instinct with the spirit of freedom! How can they make allowance for the manifold eccentricities of a literature where thought is allowed to expatiate in all the independence of individual caprice! How can they possibly, trained to pay such nice deference to outward finish and mere verbal elegance, have any sympathy with the rough and homely beauties

which emanate from the people and are addressed to the people?

The French, nurtured under freer forms of government, have contrived to come under a system of literary laws scarcely less severe. Their first great dramatic production gave rise to a scheme of critical legislation which has continued ever since to press on the genius of the nation in all the higher walks of poetic art. Amid all the mutations of state, the tone of criticism has remained essentially the same to the present century, when, indeed, the boiling passions and higher excitements of a revolutionary age have made the classic models on which their literature was cast appear somewhat too frigid, and a warmer coloring has been sought by an infusion of English sentiment. But this mixture, or rather confusion, of styles, neither French nor English, seems to rest on no settled principles, and is, probably, too alien to the genius of the people to continue permanent.

The French, forming themselves early on a foreign and antique model, were necessarily driven to rules, as a substitute for those natural promptings which have directed the course of other modern nations, in the career of letters. Such rules, of course, while assimilating them to antiquity, drew them aside from sympathy with their own contemporaries. How can they, thus formed on an artificial system, enter into the spirit of other literatures so uncongenial with their own?

That the French continued subject to such a system, with little change to the present age, is

evinced by the example of Voltaire, a writer whose lawless ridicule,

> "like the wind,
> Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,"

but whose revolutionary spirit made no serious changes in the principles of the national criticism. Indeed, his commentaries on Corneille furnish evidence of a willingness to contract still closer the range of the poet, and to define more accurately the laws by which his movements were to be controlled. Voltaire's history affords an evidence of the truth of the Horatian maxim, "*naturam expellas,*" etc. In his younger days he passed some time, as is well known, in England, and contracted there a certain relish for the strange models which came under his observation. On his return he made many attempts to introduce the foreign school with which he had become acquainted to his own countrymen. His vanity was gratified by detecting the latent beauties of his barbarian neighbors and by being the first to point them out to his countrymen. It associated him with names venerated on the other side of the Channel, and at home transferred a part of their glory to himself. Indeed, he was not backward in transferring as much as he could of it, by borrowing on his own account, where he could venture, *manibus plenis,* and with very little acknowledgment. The French at length became so far reconciled to the monstrosities of their neighbors that a regular translation of Shakspeare, the lord of the British Pandemonium, was executed by Letourneur, a scholar of no great merit; but the work was well received. Voltaire,

the veteran, in his solitude of Ferney, was roused, by the applause bestowed on the English poet in his Parisian costume, to a sense of his own imprudence. He saw, in imagination, the altars which had been raised to him, as well as to the other master-spirits of the national drama, in a fair way to be overturned in order to make room for an idol of his own importation. "Have you seen," he writes, speaking of Letourneur's version, "his abominable trash? Will you endure the affront put upon France by it? There are no epithets bad enough, nor fool's-caps, nor pillories enough in all France for such a scoundrel. The blood tingles in my old veins in speaking of him. What is the most dreadful part of the affair is, the monster has his party in France; and, to add to my shame and consternation, it was I who first sounded the praises of *this Shakspeare*,—I who first showed the pearls, picked here and there, from his overgrown dung-heap. Little did I anticipate that I was helping to trample under foot, at some future day, the laurels of Racine and Corneille to adorn the brows of a barbarous player,—this drunkard of a Shakspeare." Not content with this expectoration of his bile, the old poet transmitted a formal letter of remonstrance to D'Alembert, which was read publicly, as designed, at a regular *séance* of the Academy. The document, after expatiating at length on the blunders, vulgarities, and indecencies of the English bard, concludes with this appeal to the critical body he was addressing: "Paint to yourselves, gentlemen, Louis the Fourteenth in his gallery at Versailles, surrounded by his brilliant

court: a tatterdemalion advances, covered with rags, and proposes to the assembly to abandon the tragedies of Racine for a mountebank, full of grimaces, with nothing but a lucky hit, now and then, to redeem them."

At a later period, Ducis, the successor of Voltaire, if we remember right, in the Academy, a writer of far superior merit to Letourneur, did the British bard into much better French than his predecessor; though Ducis, as he takes care to acquaint us, "did his best to efface those startling impressions of horror which would have damned his author in the polished theatres of Paris!" Voltaire need not have taken the affair so much to heart. Shakspeare, reduced within the compass, as much as possible, of the rules, with all his eccentricities and peculiarities—all that made him English, in fact—smoothed away, may be tolerated, and to a certain extent countenanced, in the "polished theatres of Paris." But this is not

> "Shakspeare, *Nature's* child,
> Warbling his native wood-notes wild."

The Germans are just the antipodes of their French neighbors. Coming late on the arena of modern literature, they would seem to be particularly qualified for excelling in criticism by the variety of styles and models for their study supplied by other nations. They have, accordingly, done wonders in this department, and have extended their critical wand over the remotest regions, dispelling the mists of old prejudice, and throwing the light of learning on what before was dark

and inexplicable. They certainly are entitled to the credit of a singularly cosmopolitan power of divesting themselves of local and national prejudice. No nation has done so much to lay the foundations of that reconciling spirit of criticism which, instead of condemning a difference of taste in different nations as a departure from it, seeks to explain such discrepancies by the peculiar circumstances of the nation, and thus from the elements of discord, as it were, to build up a universal and harmonious system. The exclusive and unfavorable views entertained by some of their later critics respecting the French literature, indeed, into which they have been urged, no doubt, by a desire to counteract the servile deference shown to that literature by their countrymen of the preceding age, forms an important exception to their usual candor.

As general critics, however, the Germans are open to grave objections. The very circumstances of their situation, so favorable, as we have said, to the formation of a liberal criticism, have encouraged the taste for theories and for system-building, always unpropitious to truth. Whoever broaches a theory has a hard battle to fight with conscience. If the theory cannot conform to the facts, so much the worse for the facts, as some wag has said; they must, at all events, conform to the theory. The Germans have put together hypotheses with the facility with which children construct card houses, and many of them bid fair to last as long. They show more industry in accumulating materials than taste or discretion

in their arrangement. They carry their fantastic imagination beyond the legitimate province of the muse into the sober fields of criticism. Their philosophical systems, curiously and elaborately devised, with much ancient lore and solemn imaginings, may remind one of some of those venerable English cathedrals where the magnificent and mysterious Gothic is blended with the clumsy Saxon.* The effect, on the whole, is grand, but grotesque withal.

The Germans are too often sadly wanting in discretion, or, in vulgar parlance, taste. They are perpetually overleaping the modesty of nature. They are possessed by a cold-blooded enthusiasm, if we may say so,—since it seems to come rather from the head than the heart,—which spurs them on over the plainest barriers of common sense, until even the right becomes the wrong. A striking example of these defects is furnished by the dramatic critic Schlegel, whose "Lectures" are, or may be, familiar to every reader, since they have been reprinted in the English version in this country. No critic, not even a native, has thrown such a flood of light on the characteristics of the sweet bard of Avon. He has made himself so intimately acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of the poet's age and country that he has been enabled to speculate on his productions as those of a contemporary. In this way he has furnished a key to the mysteries of his composition, has reduced what seemed anomalous to system,

* This sentence was penned before Prescott had seen any English cathedrals. It would be difficult to discern any clumsy *Saxon* in those structures.—M.

and has supplied Shakspeare's own countrymen with new arguments for vindicating the spontaneous suggestions of feeling on strictly philosophical principles. Not content with this important service, he, as usual, pushes his argument to extremes, vindicates obvious blemishes as necessary parts of a system, and calls on us to admire, in contradiction to the most ordinary principles of taste and common sense. Thus, for example, speaking of Shakspeare's notorious blunders in geography and chronology, he coolly tells us, "I undertake to prove that Shakspeare's anachronisms are, for the most part, committed purposely and after great consideration." In the same vein, speaking of the poet's villanous puns and quibbles, which, to his shame, or, rather, that of his age, so often bespangle with tawdry brilliancy the majestic robe of the Muse, he assures us that "the poet here probably, as everywhere else, has followed principles which will bear a strict examination." But the intrepidity of criticism never went farther than in the conclusion of this same analysis, where he unhesitatingly assigns several apocryphal plays to Shakspeare, gravely informing us that the last three, "Sir John Oldcastle," "A Yorkshire Tragedy," and "Thomas Lord Cromwell," of which the English critics speak with unreserved contempt, "are not only unquestionably Shakspeare's, but, in his judgment, rank among the best and ripest of his works!" The old bard, could he raise his head from the tomb where none might disturb his bones, would exclaim, we imagine, "*Non tali auxilio!*"

It shows a tolerable degree of assurance in a critic thus to dogmatize on nice questions of verbal resemblance which have so long baffled the natives of the country, who, on such questions, obviously can be the only competent judges. It furnishes a striking example of the want of discretion noticeable in so many of the German scholars. With all these defects, however, it cannot be denied that they have widely extended the limits of rational criticism, and, by their copious stores of erudition, furnished the student with facilities for attaining the best points of view for a comprehensive survey of both ancient and modern literature.

The English have had advantages, on the whole, greater than those of any other people for perfecting the science of general criticism. They have had no academies to bind the wing of genius to the earth by their thousand wire-drawn subtleties. No Inquisition has placed its burning seal upon the lip and thrown its dark shadow over the recesses of the soul. They have enjoyed the inestimable privilege of thinking what they pleased, and of uttering what they thought. Their minds, trained to independence, have had no occasion to shrink from encountering any topic, and have acquired a masculine confidence indispensable to a calm appreciation of the mighty and widely diversified productions of genius, as unfolded under the influences of as widely diversified institutions and national character. Their own literature, with chameleon-like delicacy, has reflected all the various aspects of the nation in the successive

stages of its history. The rough, romantic beauties and gorgeous pageantry of the Elizabethan age, the stern, sublime enthusiasm of the Commonwealth, the cold brilliancy of Queen Anne, and the tumultuous movements and ardent sensibilities of the present generation, all have been reflected, as in a mirror, in the current of English literature as it has flowed down through the lapse of ages. It is easy to understand what advantages this cultivation of all these different styles of composition at home must give the critic in divesting himself of narrow and local prejudice, and in appreciating the genius of foreign literatures, in each of which some one or other of these different styles has found favor. To this must be added the advantages derived from the structure of the English language itself, which, compounded of the Teutonic and the Latin, offers facilities for a comprehension of other literatures not afforded by those languages, as the German and the Italian, for instance, almost exclusively derived from but one of them.

With all this, the English, as we have remarked, have made fewer direct contributions to general literary criticism than the Continental nations, unless, indeed, we take into the account the periodical criticism, which has covered the whole field with a light skirmishing, very unlike any systematic plan of operations. The good effect of this guerilla warfare may well be doubted. Most of these critics for the nonce (and we certainly are competent judges on this point) come to their work with little previous preparation. Their at-

tention has been habitually called, for the most part, in other directions, and they throw off an accidental essay in the brief intervals of other occupation. Hence their views are necessarily often superficial, and sometimes contradictory, as may be seen from turning over the leaves of any journal where literary topics are widely discussed; for, whatever consistency may be demanded in politics or religion, very free scope is offered, even in the same journal, to literary speculation. Even when the article may have been the fruit of a mind ripened by study and meditation on congenial topics, it too often exhibits only the partial view suggested by the particular and limited direction of the author's thoughts in this instance. Truth is not much served by this irregular process; and the general illumination indispensable to a full and fair survey of the whole ground can never be supplied from such scattered and capricious gleams thrown over it at random.

Another obstacle to a right result is founded in the very constitution of review-writing. Miscellaneous in its range of topics, and addressed to a miscellaneous class of readers, its chief reliance for success in competition with the thousand novelties of the day is in the temporary interest it can excite. Instead of a conscientious discussion and cautious examination of the matter in hand, we too often find an attempt to stimulate the popular appetite by piquant sallies of wit, by caustic sarcasm, or by a pert, dashing confidence, that cuts the knot it cannot readily unloose. Then,

again, the spirit of periodical criticism would seem to be little favorable to perfect impartiality. The critic, shrouded in his secret tribunal, too often demeans himself like a stern inquisitor, whose business is rather to convict than to examine. Criticism is directed to scent out blemishes instead of beauties. "*Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*" is the bloody motto of a well-known British periodical, which, under this piratical flag, has sent a broadside into many a gallant bark that deserved better at its hands.

When we combine with all this the spirit of patriotism, or, what passes for such with nine-tenths of the world, the spirit of national vanity, we shall find abundant motives for a deviation from a just, impartial estimate of foreign literatures. And if we turn over the pages of the best-conducted English journals, we shall probably find ample evidence of the various causes we have enumerated. We shall find, amid abundance of shrewd and sarcastic observation, smart skirmish of wit, and clever antithesis, a very small infusion of sober, dispassionate criticism; the criticism founded on patient study and on strictly philosophical principles; the criticism on which one can safely rely as the criterion of good taste, and which, however tame it may appear to the jaded appetite of the literary lounger, is the only one that will attract the eye of posterity.

The work named at the head of our article will, we suspect, notwithstanding the author's brilliant reputation, never meet this same eye of posterity. Though purporting to be, in its main

design, an Essay on English Literature, it is, in fact, a multifarious compound of as many ingredients as entered into the witches' caldron, to say nothing of a gallery of portraits of dead and living, among the latter of whom M. de Chateaubriand himself is not the least conspicuous. "I have treated of every thing," he says, truly enough, in his preface, "the Present, the Past, the Future." The parts are put together in the most grotesque and disorderly manner, with some striking coincidences, occasionally, of characters and situations, and some facts not familiar to every reader. The most unpleasant feature in the book is a doleful lamentation of the author over the evil times on which he has fallen. He has, indeed, lived somewhat beyond his time, which was that of Charles the Tenth, of pious memory,—the good old time of apostolicals and absolutists, which will not be likely to revisit France again very soon. Indeed, our unfortunate author reminds one of some weather-beaten hulk which the tide has left high and dry on the strand, and whose signals of distress are little heeded by the rest of the convoy, which have trimmed their sails more dexterously and sweep merrily on before the breeze. The present work affords glimpses, occasionally, of the author's happier style, which has so often fascinated us in his earlier productions. On the whole, however, it will add little to his reputation, nor, probably, much subtract from it. When a man has sent forth a score or two of octavos into the world, and as good as some of M. de Chateaubriand's, he can bear up

under a poor one now and then. This is not the first indifferent work laid at his door, and, as he promises to keep the field for some time longer, it will probably not be the last.

We pass over the first half of the first volume, to come to the Reformation, the point of departure, as it were, for modern civilization. Our author's views in relation to it, as we might anticipate, are not precisely those we should entertain.

"In a religious point of view," he says, "the Reformation is leading insensibly to indifference, or the complete absence of faith: the reason is, that the independence of the mind terminates in two gulfs, doubt and incredulity.

"By a very natural reaction, the Reformation, at its birth, rekindled the dying flame of Catholic fanaticism. It may thus be regarded as the indirect cause of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the disturbances of the League, the assassination of Henry the Fourth, the murders in Ireland, and of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the *dragonnades!*"—Vol. i. p. 198.

As to the tendency of the Reformation towards doubt and incredulity, we know that free inquiry, continually presenting new views as the sphere of observation is enlarged, may unsettle old principles without establishing any fixed ones in their place, or, in other words, lead to skepticism; but we doubt if this happens more frequently than under the opposite system, inculcated by the Romish Church, which, by precluding examination, excludes the only ground of rational belief. At all events, skepticism in the former case is

much more remediable than in the latter; since the subject of it, by pursuing his inquiries, will, it is to be hoped, as truth is mighty, arrive at last at a right result; while the Romanist, inhibited from such inquiry, has no remedy. The ingenious author of "Doblado's Letters from Spain" has painted in the most affecting colors the state of such a mind, which, declining to take its creed at the bidding of another, is lost in the labyrinth of doubt without a clue to guide it. As to charging on the Reformation the various enormities with which the above extract concludes, the idea is certainly new. It is, in fact, making the Protestants guilty of their own persecution, and Henry the Fourth of his own assassination; quite an original view of the subject, which, as far as we know, has hitherto escaped the attention of historians.

A few pages farther, and we find the following information respecting the state of Catholicism in our own country:

"Maryland, a Catholic and very populous state, made common cause with the others, and *now most of the Western States are Catholic.* The progress of this communion in the United States of America exceeds belief. There it has been invigorated in its evangelical aliment, popular liberty, *while other communions decline in profound indifference.*"—Vol. i. p. 201.

We were not aware of this state of things. We did indeed know that the Roman Church had increased much of late years, especially in the Valley of the Mississippi; but so have other communions,

as the Methodist and Baptist, for example, the latter of which comprehends five times as many disciples as the Roman Catholic. As to the population of the latter in the West, the whole number of Catholics in the Union does not amount, probably, to three-fourths of the number of inhabitants in the single Western State of Ohio. The truth is, that in a country where there is no established or favored sect, and where the clergy depend on voluntary contribution for their support, there must be constant efforts at proselytism, and a mutation of religious opinion, according to the convictions, or fancied convictions, of the converts. What one denomination gains another loses, till, roused in its turn by its rival, new efforts are made to retrieve its position, and the equilibrium is restored. In the mean time, the population of the whole country goes forward with giant strides, and each sect boasts, and boasts with truth, of the hourly augmentation of its numbers. Those of the Roman Catholics are swelled, moreover, by a considerable addition from emigration, many of the poor foreigners, especially the Irish, being of that persuasion. But this is no ground of triumph, as it infers no increase to the sum of Catholicism, since what is thus gained in the New World is lost in the Old.

Our author pronounces the Reformation hostile to the arts, poetry, eloquence, elegant literature, and even the spirit of military heroism. But hear his own words:

"The Reformation, imbued with the spirit of its founder, declared itself hostile to the arts. It

sacked tombs, churches and monuments, and made in France and England heaps of ruins." . . .

"The beautiful in literature will be found to exist in a greater or lesser degree, in proportion as writers have approximated to the genius of the Roman Church." . . .

"If the Reformation restricted genius in poetry, eloquence, and the arts, it also checked heroism in war, for heroism is imagination in the military order."—Vol. i. pp. 194–207.

This is a sweeping denunciation, and, as far as the arts of design are intended, may probably be defended. The Romish worship, its stately ritual and gorgeous ceremonies, the throng of numbers assisting, in one form or another, at the service, all require spacious and magnificent edifices, with the rich accessories of sculpture and painting, and music also, to give full effect to the spectacle. Never was there a religion which addressed itself more directly to the senses. And, fortunately for it, the immense power and revenues of its ministers enabled them to meet its exorbitant demands. On so splendid a theatre, and under such patronage, the arts were called into life in modern Europe, and most of all in that spot which represented the capital of Christendom. It was there, amid the pomp and luxury of religion, that those beautiful structures rose, with those exquisite creations of the chisel and the pencil, which embodied in themselves all the elements of ideal beauty.

But, independently of these external circumstances, the spirit of Catholicism was eminently

favorable to the artist. Shut out from free inquiry—from the Scriptures themselves—and compelled to receive the dogmas of his teachers upon trust, the road to conviction lay less through the understanding than the heart. The heart was to be moved, the affections and sympathies to be stirred, as well as the senses to be dazzled. This was the machinery by which alone could an effectual devotion to the faith be maintained in an ignorant people. It was not, therefore, Christ as a teacher delivering lessons of practical wisdom and morality that was brought before the eye, but Christ filling the offices of human sympathy, ministering to the poor and sorrowing, giving eyes to the blind, health to the sick, and life to the dead. It was Christ suffering under persecution, crowned with thorns, lacerated with stripes, dying on the cross. These sorrows and sufferings were understood by the dullest soul, and told more than a thousand homilies. So with the Virgin. It was not that sainted mother of the Saviour whom Protestants venerate but do not worship; it was the Mother of God, and entitled, like him, to adoration. It was a woman, and, as such, the object of those romantic feelings which would profane the service of the Deity, but which are not the less touching as being in accordance with human sympathies. The respect for the Virgin, indeed, partook of that which a Catholic might feel for his tutelar saint and his mistress combined. Orders of chivalry were dedicated to her service; and her shrine was piled with more offerings and frequented by more pilgrimages than the altars of

the Deity himself. Thus, feelings of love, adoration, and romantic honor, strangely blended, threw a halo of poetic glory around their object, making it the most exalted theme for the study of the artist. What wonder that this subject should have called forth the noblest inspirations of his genius? What wonder that an artist like Raphael should have found in the simple portraiture of a woman and a child the materials for immortality?

It was something like a kindred state of feeling which called into being the arts of ancient Greece, when her mythology was comparatively fresh, and faith was easy,—when the legends of the past, familiar as Scripture story at a later day, gave a real existence to the beings of fancy, and the artist, embodying these in forms of visible beauty, but finished the work which the poet had begun.

The Reformation brought other trains of ideas, and with them other influences on the arts, than those of Catholicism. Its first movements were decidedly hostile, since the works of art with which the temples were adorned, being associated with the religion itself, became odious as the symbols of idolatry. But the spirit of the Reformation gave thought a new direction even in the cultivation of art. It was no longer sought to appeal to the senses by brilliant display, or to waken the sensibilities by those superficial emotions which find relief in tears. A sterner, deeper feeling was roused. The mind was turned within, as it were, to ponder on the import of existence and its future destinies; for the chains were withdrawn from

the soul, and it was permitted to wander at large in the regions of speculation. Reason took the place of sentiment,—the useful of the merely ornamental. Facts were substituted for forms, even the ideal forms of beauty. There were to be no more Michael Angelos and Raphaels; no glorious Gothic temples which consumed generations in their building. The sublime and the beautiful were not the first objects proposed by the artist. He sought truth,—fidelity to nature. He studied the characters of his species as well as the forms of imaginary perfection. He portrayed life as developed in its thousand peculiarities before his own eyes, and the ideal gave way to the natural. In this way, new schools of painting, like that of Hogarth, for example, arose, which, however inferior in those great properties for which we must admire the masterpieces of Italian art, had a significance and philosophic depth which furnished quite as much matter for study and meditation.

A similar tendency was observable in poetry, eloquence, and works of elegant literature. The influence of the Reformation here was undoubtedly favorable, whatever it may have been on the arts. How could it be otherwise on literature, the written expression of thought, in which no grace of visible forms and proportions, no skill of mechanical execution, can cheat the eye with the vain semblance of genius? But it was not until the warm breath of the Reformation had dissolved the icy fetters which had so long held the spirit of man in bondage that the genial current of the

soul was permitted to flow, that the gates of reason were unbarred, and the mind was permitted to taste of the tree of knowledge, forbidden tree no longer. Where was the scope for eloquence when thought was stifled in the very sanctuary of the heart? for out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.

There might, indeed, be an elaborate attention to the outward forms of expression, an exquisite finish of verbal arrangement, the dress and garniture of thought. And, in fact, the Catholic nations have surpassed the Protestant in attention to verbal elegance and the soft music of numbers, to nice rhetorical artifice and brilliancy of composition. The poetry of Italy and the prose of France bear ample evidence how much time and talent have been expended on this beauty of outward form, the rich vehicle of thought. But where shall we find the powerful reasoning, various knowledge, and fearless energy of diction which stamp the oratory of Protestant England and America. In France, indeed, where prose has received a higher polish and classic elegance than in any other country, pulpit eloquence has reached an uncommon degree of excellence; for, though much was excluded, the avenues to the heart, as with the painter and the sculptor, were still left open to the orator. If there has been a deficiency in this respect in the English Church, which all will not admit, it arises probably from the fact that the mind, unrestricted, has been occupied with reasoning rather than rhetoric, and sought to clear away old prejudices and establish new truths, in-

stead of wakening a transient sensibility or dazzling the imagination with poetic flights of eloquence. That it is the fault of the preacher, at all events, and not of Protestantism, is shown by a striking example under our own eyes, that of our distinguished countryman Dr. Channing, whose style is irradiated with all the splendors of a glowing imagination, showing, as powerfully as any other example, probably, in English prose, of what melody and compass the language is capable under the touch of genius instinct with genuine enthusiasm. Not that we would recommend this style, grand and beautiful as it is, for imitation. We think we have seen the ill effects of this already in more than one instance. In fact, no style should be held up as a model for imitation. Dr. Johnson tells us, in one of those oracular passages somewhat threadbare now, that "whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." With all deference to the great critic, who, by the formal cut of the sentence just quoted, shows that he did not care to follow his own prescription, we think otherwise. Whoever would write a good English style, we should say, should acquaint himself with the mysteries of the language as revealed in the writings of the best masters, but should form his own style on nobody but himself. Every man, at least every man with a spark of originality in his composition, has his own peculiar way of thinking, and, to give it effect, it must find its way out in its own peculiar

language. Indeed, it is impossible to separate language from thought in that delicate blending of both which is called style; at least, it is impossible to produce the same effect with the original by any copy, however literal. We may imitate the structure of a sentence, but the ideas which gave it its peculiar propriety we cannot imitate. The forms of expression that suit one man's train of thinking no more suit another's than one man's clothes will suit another. They will be sure to be either too large or too small, or, at all events, not to make what gentlemen of the needle call a *good fit*. If the party chances, as is generally the case, to be rather under size, and the model is over size, this will only expose his own littleness the more. There is no case more in point than that afforded by Dr. Johnson himself. His brilliant style has been the ambition of every school-boy, and of some children of larger growth, since the days of the Rambler. But the nearer they come to it the worse. The beautiful is turned into the fantastic, and the sublime into the ridiculous. The most curious example of this within our recollection is the case of Dr. Symmons, the English editor of Milton's prose writings, and the biographer of the poet. The little doctor has maintained throughout his ponderous volume a most exact imitation of the great doctor, his sesquipedalian words, the florid rotundity of period. With all this cumbrous load of brave finery on his back, swelled to twice its original dimensions, he looks for all the world, as he is, like a mere bag of wind,—a scarecrow, to admonish others of the folly of similar depredations.

But to return. The influence of the Reformation on elegant literature was never more visible than in the first great English school of poets, which came soon after it, at the close of the sixteenth century. The writers of that period displayed a courage, originality, and truth highly characteristic of the new revolution, which had been introduced by breaking down the old landmarks of opinion and giving unbounded range to speculation and inquiry. The first great poet, Spenser, adopted the same vehicle of imagination with the Italian bards of chivalry, the romantic epic; but, instead of making it, like them, a mere revel of fancy, with no further object than to delight the reader by brilliant combinations, he moralized his song, and gave it a deeper and more solemn import by the mysteries of Allegory, which, however prejudicial to its effect as a work of art, showed a mind too intent on serious thoughts and inquiries itself to be content with the dazzling but impotent coruscations of genius, that serve no other end than that of amusement.

In the same manner, Shakspeare and the other dramatic writers of the time, instead of adopting the formal rules recognized afterwards by the French writers, their long rhetorical flourishes, their exaggerated models of character, and ideal forms, went freely and fearlessly into all the varieties of human nature, the secret depths of the soul, touching on all the diversified interests of humanity,—for he might touch on all without fear of persecution,—and thus making his productions a storehouse of philosophy, of lessons of practical

wisdom, deep, yet so clear that he who runs may read.

But the spirit of the Reformation did not descend in all its fulness on the Muse till the appearance of Milton. That great poet was in heart as thoroughly a Reformer, and in doctrine much more thoroughly so than Luther himself. Indignant at every effort to crush the spirit, and to cheat it, in his own words, "of that liberty which rarefies and enlightens it like the influence of heaven," he proclaimed the rights of man as a rational, immortal being, undismayed by menace and obloquy, amid a generation of servile and unprincipled sycophants. The blindness which excluded him from the things of earth opened to him more glorious and spiritualized conceptions of heaven, and aided him in exhibiting the full influence of those sublime truths which the privilege of free inquiry in religious matters had poured upon the mind. His Muse was as eminently the child of Protestantism as that of Dante, who resembled him in so many traits of character, was of Catholicism. The latter poet, coming first among the moderns, after the fountains of the great deep which had so long overwhelmed the world were broken up, displayed in his wonderful composition all the elements of modern institutions as distinguished from those of antiquity. He first showed the full and peculiar influence of Christianity on literature, but it was Christianity under the form of Catholicism. His subject, spiritual in its design, like Milton's, was sustained by all the auxiliaries of a visible and material existence. His

passage through the infernal abyss is a series of tragic pictures of human woe, suggesting greater refinements of cruelty than were ever imagined by a heathen poet. Amid all the various forms of mortal anguish, we look in vain for the mind as a means of torture. In like manner, in ascending the scale of celestial being, we pass through a succession of brilliant *fêtes*, made up of light, music, and motion, increasing in splendor and velocity, till all are lost and confounded in the glories of the Deity. Even the pencil of the great master, dipped in these gorgeous tints of imagination, does not shrink from the attempt to portray the outlines of Deity itself. In this he aspired to what many of his countrymen in the sister arts of design have since attempted, and, like him, have failed; for who can hope to give form to the Infinite? In the same false style Dante personifies the spirits of evil, including Satan himself. Much was doubtless owing to the age, though much, also, must be referred to the genius of Catholicism, which, appealing to the senses, has a tendency to materialize the spiritual, as Protestantism, with deeper reflection, aims to spiritualize the material. Thus Milton, in treading similar ground, borrows his illustrations from intellectual sources, conveys the image of the Almighty by his attributes, and, in the frequent portraiture which he introduces of Satan, suggests only vague conceptions of form, the faint outlines of matter, as it were, stretching vast over many a rood, but towering sublime by the unconquerable energy of will,—the fit representative

of the principle of evil. Indeed, Milton has scarcely any thing of what may be called scenic decorations to produce a certain stage effect. His actors are few, and his action nothing. It is only by their intellectual and moral relations—by giving full scope to the

> "Cherub Contemplation—
> He that soars on golden wing,
> Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,"

that he has prepared for us visions of celestial beauty and grandeur which never fade from our souls.

In the dialogue with which the two poets have seasoned their poems, we see the action of the opposite influences we have described. Both give vent to metaphysical disquisition, of learned sound, and much greater length than the reader would desire; but in Milton it is the free discussion of a mind trained to wrestle boldly on abstrusest points of metaphysical theology, while Dante follows in the same old barren footsteps which had been trodden by the schoolmen. Both writers were singularly bold and independent. Dante asserted that liberty which should belong to the citizen of every free state,—that civil liberty which had been sacrificed in his own country by the spirit of faction. But Milton claimed a higher freedom,—a freedom of thinking and of giving utterance to thought, uncontrolled by human authority. He had fallen on evil times; but he had a generous confidence that his voice would reach to posterity and would be a guide and a light to the coming generations. And truly has it

proved so; for in his writings we find the germs of many of the boasted discoveries of our own day in government and education, so that he may be fairly considered as the morning star of that higher civilization which distinguishes our happier era.

Milton's poetical writings do not seem, however, to have been held in that neglect by his contemporaries which is commonly supposed. He had attracted too much attention as a political controversialist, was too much feared for his talents, as well as hated for his principles, to allow any thing which fell from his pen to pass unnoticed. Although the profits went to others, he lived to see a second edition of "Paradise Lost," and this was more than was to have been fairly anticipated of a composition of this nature, however well executed, falling on such times. Indeed, its sale was no evidence that its merits were comprehended, and may be referred to the general reputation of its author; for we find so accomplished a critic as Sir William Temple, some years later, omitting the name of Milton in his roll of writers who have done honor to modern literature, a circumstance which may perhaps be imputed to that reverence for the ancients which blinded Sir William to the merits of their successors. How could Milton be understood in his own generation, in the grovelling, sensual court of Charles the Second? How could the dull eyes so long fastened on the earth endure the blaze of his inspired genius? It was not till time had removed him to a distance that he could be calmly gazed on and his merits fairly

contemplated. Addison, as is well known, was the first to bring them into popular view, by a beautiful specimen of criticism that has permanently connected his name with that of his illustrious subject. More than half a century later, another great name in English criticism, perhaps the greatest in general reputation, Johnson, passed sentence of a very different kind on the pretentions of the poet. A production more discreditable to the author is not to be found in the whole of his voluminous works,—equally discreditable whether regarded in an historical light or as a sample of literary criticism. What shall we say of the biographer who, in allusion to that affecting passage where the blind old bard talks of himself as "in darkness, and with dangers compass'd round," can coolly remark that "this darkness, had his eyes been better employed, might undoubtedly have deserved compassion"? Or what of the critic who can say of the most exquisite effusion of Doric minstrelsy that our language boasts, "Surely no man could have fancied that he read 'Lycidas' with pleasure, had he not known the author;" and of "Paradise Lost" itself, that "its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure"? Could a more exact measure be afforded than by this single line of the poetic sensibility of the critic, and his unsuitableness for the office he had here assumed? His "Life of Milton" is a humiliating testimony of the power of political and religious prejudices to warp a great and good mind from the standard of truth, in the estimation not merely of contemporary excellence, but of the great of

PORTRAIT OF CHATEAUBRIAND.

other years, over whose frailties Time might be supposed to have drawn his friendly mantle.

Another half-century has elapsed, and ample justice has been rendered to the fame of the poet by two elaborate criticisms: the one in the "Edinburgh Review," from the pen of Mr. Macaulay; the other by Dr. Channing, in the "Christian Examiner," since republished in his own works; remarkable performances, each in the manner highly characteristic of its author, and which have contributed, doubtless, to draw attention to the prose compositions of their subject, as the criticism of Addison did to his poetry. There is something gratifying in the circumstance that this great advocate of intellectual liberty should have found his most able and eloquent expositor among us, whose position qualifies us in a peculiar manner for profiting by the rich legacy of his genius. It was but discharging a debt of gratitude.

Chateaubriand has much to say about Milton, for whose writings, both prose and poetry, notwithstanding the difference of their sentiments on almost all points of politics and religion, he appears to entertain the most sincere reverence. His criticisms are liberal and just; they show a thorough study of his author; but neither the historical facts nor the reflections will suggest much that is new on a subject now become trite to the English reader.

We may pass over a good deal of skimble-skamble stuff about men and things, which our author may have cut out of his commonplace-book, to come to his remarks on Sir Walter Scott, whom he does not rate so highly as most critics.

"The illustrious painter of Scotland," he says, "seems to me to have created a false class; he has, in my opinion, confounded history and romance. The novelist has set about writing historical romances, and the historian romantic histories."—Vol. ii. p. 306

We should have said, on the contrary, that he had improved the character of both; that he had given new value to romance by building it on history, and new charms to history by embellishing it with the graces of romance.

To be more explicit. The principal historical work of Scott is the "Life of Napoleon." It has, unquestionably, many of the faults incident to a dashing style of composition, which precluded the possibility of compression and arrangement in the best form of which the subject was capable. This, in the end, may be fatal to the perpetuity of the work, for posterity will be much less patient than our own age. He will have a much heavier load to carry, inasmuch as he is to bear up under all of his own time, and ours too. It is very certain, then, some must go by the board; and nine sturdy volumes, which is the amount of Sir Walter's English edition, will be somewhat alarming. Had he confined himself to half the quantity, there would have been no ground for distrust. Every day, nay, hour, we see, ay, and feel, the ill effects of this rapid style of composition, so usual with the best writers of our day. The immediate profits which such writers are pretty sure to get, notwithstanding the example of M. Chateaubriand, operate like the dress-

ing improvidently laid on a naturally good soil, forcing out noxious weeds in such luxuriance as to check, if not absolutely to kill, the more healthful vegetation. Quantities of trivial detail find their way into the page, mixed up with graver matters. Instead of that skilful preparation by which all the avenues verge at last to one point, so as to leave a distinct impression—an impression of unity—on the reader, he is hurried along zigzag, in a thousand directions, or round and round, but never, in the cant of the times, "going ahead" an inch. He leaves off pretty much where he set out, except that his memory may be tolerably well stuffed with facts, which, from want of some principle of cohesion, will soon drop out of it. He will find himself like a traveller who has been riding through a fine country, it may be, by moonlight, getting glimpses of every thing, but no complete well-illuminated view of the whole (*"quale per incertam lunam,"* etc.), or, rather, like the same traveller whizzing along in a locomotive so rapidly as to get even a glimpse fairly of nothing, instead of making his tour in such a manner as would enable him to pause at what was worth his attention, to pass by night over the barren and uninteresting, and occasionally to rise to such elevations as would afford the best points of view for commanding the various prospect.

The romance-writer labors under no such embarrassments. He may, undoubtedly, precipitate his work so that it may lack proportion, and the nice arrangement required by the rules which, fifty years ago, would have condemned it as a work of

art. But the criticism of the present day is not so squeamish, or, to say truth, pedantic. It is enough for the writer of fiction if he give pleasure; and this, everybody knows, is not effected by the strict observance of artificial rules. It is of little consequence how the plot is entangled, or whether it be untied or cut in order to extricate the *dramatis personæ*. At least it is of little consequence compared with the true delineation of character. The story is serviceable only as it affords a means for the display of this; and if the novelist but keep up the interest of his story and the truth of his characters, we easily forgive any dislocations which his light vehicle may encounter from too heedless motion. Indeed, rapidity of motion may in some sort favor him, keeping up the glow of his invention, and striking out, as he dashes along, sparks of wit and fancy, that give a brilliant illumination to his track. But in history there must be another kind of process,—a process at once slow and laborious. Old parchments are to be ransacked, charters and musty records to be deciphered, and stupid, worm-eaten chroniclers, who had much more of passion, frequently, to blind, than good sense to guide them, must be sifted and compared. In short, a sort of Medea-like process is to be gone through, and many an old bone is to be boiled over in the caldron before it can come out again clothed in the elements of beauty. The dreams of the novelist,—the poet of prose,—on the other hand, are beyond the reach of art, and the magician calls up the most brilliant forms of fancy by a single stroke of his wand.

Scott, in his History, was relieved in some degree from this necessity of studious research by borrowing his theme from contemporary events. It was his duty, indeed, to examine evidence carefully and sift out contradictions and errors. This demanded shrewdness and caution, but not much previous preparation and study. It demanded, above all, candor; for it was his business not to make out a case for the client, but to weigh both sides, like an impartial judge, before summing up the evidence and delivering his conscientious opinion. We believe there was no good ground for charging Scott with having swerved from this part of his duty. Those who expected to see him deify his hero and raise altars to his memory were disappointed; and so were those, also, who demanded that the tail and cloven hoof should be made to peep out beneath the imperial robe. But this proves his impartiality. It would be unfair, however, to require the degree of impartiality which is to be expected from one removed to a distance from the theatre of strife, from those national interests and feelings which are so often the disturbing causes of historic fairness. An American, no doubt, would have been in this respect in a more favorable point of view for contemplating the European drama. The ocean, stretched between us and the Old World, has the effect of time, and extinguishes, or, at least, cools, the hot and angry feelings which find their way into every man's bosom within the atmosphere of the contest. Scott was a Briton, with all the peculiarities of one,—at least of a North Briton;

and the future historian who gathers materials from his labors will throw these national predilections into the scale in determining the probable accuracy of his statements. These are not greater than might occur to any man, and allowance will always be made for them, on the ground of a general presumption; so that a greater degree of impartiality, by leading to false conclusions in this respect, would scarcely have served the cause of truth better with posterity. An individual who felt his reputation compromised may have joined issue on this or that charge of inaccuracy; but no such charge has come from any of the leading journals in the country, which would not have been slow to expose it, and which would not, considering the great popularity and, consequently, influence of the work, have omitted, as they did, to notice it at all, had it afforded any obvious ground of exception on this score. Where, then, is the romance which our author accuses Sir Walter of blending with history?

Scott was, in truth, master of the picturesque. He understood, better than any historian since the time of Livy, how to dispose his lights and shades so as to produce the most striking result. This property of romance he had a right to borrow. This talent is particularly observable in the animated parts of his story,—in his battles, for example. No man ever painted those terrible scenes with greater effect. He had a natural relish for gunpowder; and his mettle roused, like that of a war-horse, at the sound of the trumpet. His acquaintance with military science enabled him

to employ a technical phraseology, just technical enough to give a knowing air to his descriptions, without embarrassing the reader by a pedantic display of unintelligible jargon. This is a talent rare in a civilian. Nothing can be finer than many of his battle-pieces in his "Life of Bonaparte," unless, indeed, we except one or two in his "History of Scotland," as the fight of Bannockburn, for example, in which Burns's "Scots, wha hae" seems to breathe in every line.

It is when treading on Scottish ground that he seems to feel all his strength. "I seem always to step more firmly," he said to some one, "when on my own native heather." His mind was steeped in Scottish lore, and his bosom warmed with a sympathetic glow for the age of chivalry. Accordingly, his delineations of this period, whether in history or romance, are unrivalled; as superior in effect to those of most compilers as the richly-stained glass of the feudal ages is superior in beauty and brilliancy of tints to a modern imitation. If this be borrowing something from romance, it is, we repeat, no more than what is lawful for the historian, and explains the meaning of our assertion that he has improved history by the embellishments of fiction.

Yet, after all, how wide the difference between the province of history and of romance, under Scott's own hands, may be shown by comparing his account of Mary's reign in his "History of Scotland" with the same period in the novel of "The Abbot." The historian must keep the beaten track of events. The novelist launches into

the illimitable regions of fiction, provided only that his historic portraits be true to their originals. By due attention to this, fiction is made to minister to history, and may, in point of fact, contain as much real truth,—truth of character, though not of situation. "The difference between the historian and me," says Fielding, "is that with him every thing is false but the names and dates, while with me nothing is false but these." There is, at least, as much truth in this as in most witticisms.

It is the great glory of Scott that, by nice attention to costume and character in his novels, he has raised them to historic importance without impairing their interest as works of art. Who now would imagine that he could form a satisfactory notion of the golden days of Queen Bess that had not read "Kenilworth"? or of Richard Cœur-de-Lion and his brave paladins that had not read "Ivanhoe"? Why, then, it has been said, not at once incorporate into regular history all these traits which give such historical value to the novel? Because in this way the strict truth which history requires would be violated. This cannot be. The fact is, History and Romance are too near akin ever to be lawfully united. By mingling them together, a confusion is produced, like the mingling of day and night, mystifying and distorting every feature of the landscape. It is enough for the novelist if he be true to the spirit; the historian must be true also to the letter. He cannot coin pertinent remarks and anecdotes to illustrate the characters of his drama. He cannot even provide them with suitable costumes. He

must take just what Father Time has given him, just what he finds in the records of the age, setting down neither more nor less. Now, the dull chroniclers of the old time rarely thought of putting down the smart sayings of the great people they biographize, still less of entering into minute circumstances of personal interest. These were too familiar to contemporaries to require it, and therefore they waste their breath on more solemn matters of state, all important in their generation, but not worth a rush in the present. What would the historian not give could he borrow those fine touches of nature with which the novelist illustrates the characters of his actors,—natural touches, indeed, but, in truth, just as artificial as any other part,—all coined in the imagination of the writer! There is the same difference between his occupation and that of the novelist that there is between the historical and the portrait painter. The former necessarily takes some great subject, with great personages, all strutting about in gorgeous state attire and air of solemn tragedy, while his brother artist insinuates himself into the family groups, and picks out natural, familiar scenes and faces, laughing or weeping, but in the charming undress of nature. What wonder that novel-reading should be so much more amusing than history?

But we have already trespassed too freely on the patience of our readers, who will think the rambling spirit of our author contagious. Before dismissing him, however, we will give a taste of his quality by one or two extracts, not very ger-

mane to English literature, but about as much so as a great part of the work. The first is a poetical sally on Bonaparte's burial-place, quite in Monsieur Chateaubriand's peculiar vein:

"The solitude of Napoleon, in his exile and his tomb, has thrown another kind of spell over a brilliant memory. Alexander did not die in sight of Greece; he disappeared amid the pomp of distant Babylon. Bonaparte did not close his eyes in the presence of France; he passed away in the gorgeous horizon of the torrid zone. The man who had shown himself in such powerful reality vanished like a dream; his life, which belonged to history, co-operated in the poetry of his death. He now sleeps forever, like a hermit or a paria, beneath a willow, in a narrow valley, surrounded by steep rocks, at the extremity of a lonely path. The depth of the silence which presses upon him can only be compared to the vastness of that tumult which had surrounded him. Nations are absent; their throng has retired. The bird of the tropics, harnessed to the car of the sun, as Buffon magnificently expresses it, speeding his flight downward from the planet of light, rests alone, for a moment, over the ashes the weight of which has shaken the equilibrium of the globe.

"Bonaparte crossed the ocean to repair to his final exile, regardless of that beautiful sky which delighted Columbus, Vasco de Gama and Camoëns. Stretched upon the ship's stern, he perceived not that unknown constellations were sparkling over his head. His powerful glance, for the first time, encountered their rays. What to him

were stars which he had never seen from his bivouacs and which had never shone over his empire? Nevertheless, not one of them has failed to fulfil its destiny: one half of the firmament spread its light over his cradle, the other half was reserved to illuminate his tomb."—Vol. ii. pp. 185, 186.

The next extract relates to the British statesman, William Pitt:

"Pitt, tall and slender, had an air at once melancholy and sarcastic. His delivery was cold, his intonation monotonous, his action scarcely perceptible. At the same time, the lucidness and the fluency of his thoughts, the logic of his arguments, suddenly irradiated with flashes of eloquence, rendered his talents something above the ordinary line.

"I frequently saw Pitt walking across St. James's Park from his own house to the palace. On his part, George the Third arrived from Windsor, after drinking beer out of a pewter pot with the farmers of the neighborhood; he drove through the mean courts of his mean habitation in a gray chariot, followed by a few of the horse-guards. This was the master of the kings of Europe, as five or six merchants of the city are the masters of India. Pitt, dressed in black, with a steel-hilted sword by his side, and his hat under his arm, ascended, taking two or three steps at a time. In his passage he only met with three or four emigrants, who had nothing to do. Casting on us a disdainful look, he turned up his nose and his pale face, and passed on.

"At home, this great financier kept no sort of

order; he had no regular hours for his meals or for sleep. Over head and ears in debt, he paid nobody, and never could take the trouble to cast up a bill. A *valet de chambre* managed his house. Ill dressed, without pleasure, without passion, greedy of power, he despised honors, and would not be any thing more than William Pitt.

"In the month of June, 1822, Lord Liverpool took me to dine at his country-house. As we crossed Putney Heath, he showed me the small house where the son of Lord Chatham, the statesman who had had Europe in his pay and distributed with his own hand all the treasures of the world, died in poverty."—Vol. ii. pp. 277, 278.

The following extracts show the changes that have taken place in English manners and society, and may afford the "whiskered pandour" of our own day an opportunity of contrasting his style of dandyism with that of the preceding generation:

"Separated from the Continent by a long war, the English retained their manners and their national character till the end of the last century. All was not yet machine in the working classes, folly in the upper classes. On the same pavements where you now meet squalid figures and men in frock-coats, you were passed by young girls with white tippets, straw hats tied under the chin with a riband, with a basket on the arm, in which was fruit or a book: all kept their eyes cast down; all blushed when one looked at them. Frock-coats, without any other, were so unusual in London in 1793 that a woman, deploring with tears the death

of Louis the Sixteenth, said to me, 'But, my dear sir, is it true that the poor king was dressed in a frock-coat when they cut off his head?'

"The gentlemen-farmers had not yet sold their patrimony to take up their residence in London; they still formed, in the House of Commons, that independent fraction which, transferring their support from the opposition to the ministerial side, upheld the ideas of order and propriety. They hunted the fox and shot pheasants in autumn, ate fat goose at Michaelmas, greeted the sirloin with shouts of 'Roast beef forever!' complained of the present, extolled the past, cursed Pitt and the war, which doubled the price of port wine, and went to bed drunk, to begin the same life again on the following day. They felt quite sure that the glory of Great Britain would not perish so long as 'God save the King' was sung, the rotten boroughs maintained, the game-laws enforced, and hares and partridges could be sold by stealth at market, under the names of lions and ostriches." —Vol. ii. pp. 279, 280.

"In 1822, at the time of my embassy to London, the fashionable was expected to exhibit, at the first glance, an unhappy and unhealthy man; to have an air of negligence about his person, long nails, a beard neither entire nor shaven, but as if grown for a moment unawares, and forgotten during the preoccupations of wretchedness; hair in disorder; a sublime, mild, wicked eye; lips compressed in disdain of human nature; a Byronian heart, overwhelmed with weariness and disgust of life.

"The dandy of the present day must have a conquering, frivolous, insolent look. He must pay particular attention to his toilet, wear mustaches, or a beard trimmed into a circle like Queen Elizabeth's ruff, or like the radiant disc of the sun. He shows the proud independence of his character by keeping his hat upon his head, by lolling upon sofas, by thrusting his boots into the faces of the ladies seated in admiration upon chairs before him. He rides with a cane, which he carries like a taper, regardless of the horse, which he bestrides, as it were, by accident. His health must be perfect, and he must always have five or six felicities upon his hands. Some radical dandies, who have advanced the farthest towards the future, have a pipe. But, no doubt, all this has changed, even during the time that I have taken to describe it."—Vol. ii. pp. 303, 304.

The avowed purpose of the present work, singular as it may seem from the above extracts, is to serve as an introduction to a meditated translation of Milton into French, since wholly, or in part, completed by M. Chateaubriand, who thinks, truly enough, that Milton's "poetical ideas make him a man of our own epoch." When an exile in England, in his early life, during the troubles of the Revolution, our author earned an honorable subsistence by translating some of Milton's verses; and he now proposes to render the bard and himself the same kind office by his labors on a more extended scale. Thus he concludes: "I again seat myself at the table of my poet. He will have nourished me in my youth and my old age. It is

nobler and safer to have recourse to glory than to power." Our author's situation is an indifferent commentary on the value of literary fame, at least on its pecuniary value. No man has had more of it in his day. No man has been more alert to make the most of it by frequent, reiterated appearance before the public,—whether in full dress or dishabille, yet always before them; and now, in the decline of life, we find him obtaining a scanty support by "French translation and Italian song." We heartily hope that the bard of "Paradise Lost" will do better for his translator than he did for himself, and that M. de Chateaubriand will put more than five pounds in his pocket by his literary labor.

BANCROFT'S UNITED STATES *

(January, 1841)

THE celebrated line of Bishop Berkeley,

"Westward the *course* of empire takes its way,"

is too gratifying to national vanity not to be often quoted (though not always quoted right); and if we look on it in the nature of a prediction, the completion of it not being limited to any particular time, it will not be easy to disprove it. Had the bishop substituted "freedom" for "empire," it would be already fully justified by experience. It is curious to observe how steadily the progress of freedom, civil and religious,—of the enjoyment of those rights which may be called the natural rights of humanity,—has gone on from east to west, and how precisely the more or less liberal character of the social institutions of a country may be determined by its geographical position, as falling within the limits of one of the three quarters of the globe occupied wholly or in part by members of the great Caucasian family.

Thus, in Asia we find only far-extended despotisms, in which but two relations are recognized, those of master and slave: a solitary master, and a nation of slaves. No constitution exists

* "History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent. By George Bancroft." Vol. iii. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown. 8vo, pp. 468.

there to limit his authority; no intermediate body to counterbalance, or, at least, shield the people from its exercise. The people have no political existence. The monarch is literally the state. The religion of such countries is of the same complexion with their government. The free spirit of Christianity, quickening and elevating the soul by the consciousness of its glorious destiny, made few proselytes there; but Mohammedanism, with its doctrines of blind fatality, found ready favor with those who had already surrendered their wills —their responsibility—to an earthly master. In such countries, of course, there has been little progress in science. Ornamental arts, and even the literature of imagination, have been cultivated with various success; but little has been done in those pursuits which depend on freedom of inquiry and are connected with the best interests of humanity. The few monuments of an architectural kind that strike the traveller's eye are the cold memorials of pomp and selfish vanity, not those of public spirit, directed to enlarge the resources and civilization of an empire.

As we cross the boundaries into Europe, among the people of the same primitive stock and under the same parallels, we may imagine ourselves transplanted to another planet. Man no longer grovels in the dust beneath a master's frown. He walks erect, as lord of the creation, his eyes raised to that heaven to which his destinies call him. He is a free agent,—thinks, speaks, acts for himself; enjoys the fruits of his own industry; follows the career suited to his own genius and taste; ex-

plores fearlessly the secrets of time and nature; lives under laws which he has assisted in framing; demands justice as his right when those laws are invaded. In his freedom of speculation and action he has devised various forms of government. In most of them the monarchical principle is recognized; but the power of the monarch is limited by written or customary rules. The people at large enter more or less into the exercise of government; and a numerous aristocracy, interposed between them and the crown, secures them from the oppression of Eastern tyranny, while this body itself is so far an improvement in the social organization that the power, instead of being concentrated in a single person,—plaintiff, judge, and executioner,—is distributed among a large number of different individuals and interests. This is a great advance, in itself, towards popular freedom.

The tendency, almost universal, is to advance still farther. It is this war of opinion—this contest between light and darkness, now going forward in most of the countries of Europe—which furnishes the point of view from which their history is to be studied in the present, and, it may be, the following centuries; for revolutions in society, when founded on opinion,—the only stable foundation, the only foundation at which the friend of humanity does not shudder,—must be the slow work of time; and who would wish the good cause to be so precipitated that, in eradicating the old abuses which have interwoven themselves with every stone and pillar of the building, the noble building itself, which has so long

afforded security to its inmates, should be laid in ruins? What is the best, what the worst form of government, in the abstract, may be matter of debate; but there can be no doubt that the best will become the worst to a people who blindly rush into it without the preliminary training for comprehending and conducting it. Such transitions must, at least, cost the sacrifice of generations; and the patriotism must be singularly pure and abstract which, at such cost, would purchase the possible, or even probable, good of a remote posterity. Various have been the efforts in the Old World at popular forms of government, but, from some cause or other, they have failed; and however time, a wider intercourse, a greater familiarity with the practical duties of representation, and, not least of all, our own auspicious example, may prepare the European mind for the possession of republican freedom, it is very certain that, at the present moment, Europe is not the place for republics.

The true soil for these is our own continent, the New World, the last of the three great geographical divisions of which we have spoken. This is the spot on which the beautiful theories of the European philosopher—who had risen to the full freedom of speculation, while action was controlled—have been reduced to practice. The atmosphere here seems as fatal to the arbitrary institutions of the Old World as that has been to the democratic forms of our own. It seems scarcely possible that any other organization than these latter should exist here. In three centuries from the discovery of the country, the various

races by which it is tenanted, some of them from the least liberal of the European monarchies, have, with few exceptions, come into the adoption of institutions of a republican character. Toleration, civil and religious, has been proclaimed, and enjoyed to an extent unknown since the world began, throughout the wide borders of this vast continent. Alas for those portions which have assumed the exercise of these rights without fully comprehending their import,—who have been intoxicated with the fumes of freedom instead of drawing nourishment from its living principle!

It was a fortunate, or, to speak more properly, a providential thing that the discovery of the New World was postponed to the precise period when it occurred. Had it taken place at an earlier time,—during the flourishing period of the feudal ages, for example,—the old institutions of Europe, with their hallowed abuses, might have been ingrafted on this new stock, and, instead of the fruit of the tree of life, we should have furnished only varieties of a kind already far exhausted and hastening to decay. But, happily, some important discoveries in science, and, above all, the glorious Reformation, gave an electric shock to the intellect, long benumbed under the influence of a tyrannical priesthood. It taught men to distrust authority, to trace effects back to their causes, to search for themselves, and to take no guide but the reason which God had given them. It taught them to claim the right of free inquiry as their inalienable birthright, and, with free inquiry, freedom of action. The sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries were the period of the mighty struggle between the conflicting elements of religion, as the eighteenth and nineteenth have been that of the great contest for civil liberty.

It was in the midst of this universal ferment, and in consequence of it, that these shores were first peopled by our Puritan ancestors. Here they found a world where they might verify the value of those theories which had been derided as visionary or denounced as dangerous in their own land. All around was free,—free as nature herself: the mighty streams rolling on in their majesty, as they had continued to roll from the creation; the forests, which no hand had violated, flourishing in primeval grandeur and beauty; their only tenants the wild animals, or the Indians nearly as wild, scarcely held together by any tie of social polity. Nowhere was the trace of civilized man or of his curious contrivances. Here was no Star Chamber nor Court of High Commission; no racks, nor jails, nor gibbets; no feudal tyrant to grind the poor man to the dust on which he toiled; no Inquisition, to pierce into the thought, and to make thought a crime. The only eye that was upon them was the eye of Heaven.

True, indeed, in the first heats of suffering enthusiasm they did not extend that charity to others which they claimed for themselves. It was a blot on their characters, but one which they share in common with most reformers. The zeal requisite for great revolutions, whether in church or state, is rarely attended by charity for difference of opinion. Those who are willing to do and to

suffer bravely for their own doctrines attach a value to them which makes them impatient of opposition from others. The martyr for conscience' sake cannot comprehend the necessity of leniency to those who denounce those truths for which he is prepared to lay down his own life. If he set so little value on his own life, is it natural he should set more on that of others? The Dominican, who dragged his victims to the fires of the Inquisition in Spain, freely gave up his ease and his life to the duties of a missionary among the heathen. The Jesuits, who suffered martyrdom among the American savages in the propagation of their faith, stimulated those very savages to their horrid massacres of the Protestant settlements of New England. God has not often combined charity with enthusiasm. When he has done so, he has produced his noblest work,—a More, or a Fénelon.

But, if the first settlers were intolerant in practice, they brought with them the living principle of freedom, which would survive when their generation had passed away. They could not avoid it; for their coming here was in itself an assertion of that principle. They came for conscience' sake, —to worship God in their own way. Freedom of political institutions they at once avowed. Every citizen took his part in the political scheme, and enjoyed all the consideration of an equal participation in civil privileges; and liberty in political matters gradually brought with it a corresponding liberty in religious concerns. In their subsequent contest with the mother-country they learned a reason for their faith, and the best man-

ner of defending it. Their liberties struck a deep root in the soil amid storms which shook but could not prostrate them. It is this struggle with the mother-country, this constant assertion of the right of self-government, this tendency—feeble in its beginning, increasing with increasing age—towards republican institutions, which connects the Colonial history with that of the Union, and forms the true point of view from which it is to be regarded.

The history of this country naturally divides itself into three great periods: the Colonial, when the idea of independence was slowly and gradually ripening in the American mind; the Revolutionary, when this idea was maintained by arms; and that of the Union, when it was reduced to practice. The first two heads are now ready for the historian; the last is not yet ripe for him. Important contributions may be made to it in the form of local narratives, personal biographies, political discussions, subsidiary documents, and *mémoirs pour servir;* but we are too near the strife, too much in the dust and mist of the parties, to have reached a point sufficiently distant and elevated to embrace the whole field of operations in one view and paint it in its true colors and proportions for the eye of posterity. We are, besides, too new as an independent nation, our existence has been too short, to satisfy the skepticism of those who distrust the perpetuity of our political institutions. They do not consider the problem, so important to humanity, as yet solved. Such skeptics are found not only abroad, but at

home. Not that the latter suppose the possibility of again returning to those forms of arbitrary government which belong to the Old World. It would not be more chimerical to suspect the Emperor Nicholas, or Prince Metternich, or the citizen-king Louis Philippe, of being republicans at heart, and sighing for a democracy, than to suspect the people of this country (above all, of New England, the most thorough democracy in existence)—who have inherited republican principles and feelings from their ancestors, drawn them in with their mother's milk, breathed the atmosphere of them from their cradle, participated in their equal rights and glorious privileges—of foregoing their birthright and falsifying their nature so far as to acquiesce in any other than a popular form of government. But there are some skeptics who, when they reflect on the fate of similar institutions in other countries,—when they see our sister states of South America, after nobly winning their independence, split into insignificant fractions,—when they see the abuses which from time to time have crept into our own administration, and the violence offered, in manifold ways, to the Constitution,—when they see ambitious and able statesmen in one section of the country proclaiming principles which must palsy the arm of the Federal Government, and urging the people of their own quarter to efforts for securing their independence of every other quarter,—there are, we say, some wise and benevolent minds among us who, seeing all this, feel a natural distrust as to the stability of the federal compact,

and consider the experiment as still in progress.

We, indeed, are not of that number, while we respect and feel the weight of their scruples. We sympathize fully in those feelings, those hopes, it may be, which animate the great mass of our countrymen. Hope is the attribute of republics: it should be peculiarly so of ours. Our fortune is all in the advance. We have no past as compared with the nations of the Old World. Our existence is but two centuries, dating from our embryo state; our real existence as an independent people little more than half a century. We are to look forward, then, and go forward, not with vainglorious boasting, but with resolution and honest confidence. Boasting, indecorous in all, is peculiarly so in those who take credit for the great things they are going to do, not those they have done. The glorification of an Englishman or a Frenchman, with a long line of annals in his rear, may be offensive; that of an American is ridiculous. But we may feel a just confidence from the past that we shall be true to ourselves for the future; that, to borrow a cant phrase of the day, we shall be true to our *mission*,—the most momentous ever intrusted to a nation; that there is sufficient intelligence and moral principle in the people, if not always to choose the best rulers, at least to right themselves by the ejection of bad ones when they find they have been abused; that they have intelligence enough to understand their only consideration, their security as a nation, is in union; that separation into smaller communities is the creation of so many hostile states; that a large

extent of empire, instead of being an evil, from embracing regions of irreconcilable local interests, is a benefit, since it affords the means of that commercial reciprocity which makes the country, by its own resources, independent of every other; and that the representatives drawn from these "magnificent distances" will, on the whole, be apt to legislate more independently and on broader principles than if occupied with the concerns of a petty state, where each legislator is swayed by the paltry factions of his own village. In all this we may honestly confide; but our confidence will not pass for argument, will not be accepted as a solution of the problem. Time only can solve it; and until the period has elapsed which shall have fairly tried the strength of our institutions, through peace and through war, through adversity and more trying prosperity, the time will not have come to write the history of the Union.*

But, still, results have been obtained sufficiently glorious to give great consideration to the two preliminary narratives, namely, of the Colonies and the Revolution, which prepared the way for the Union. Indeed, without these results they would

* The preceding cheering remarks on the auspicious destinies of our country were written more than four years ago; and it is not now as many days since we have received the melancholy tidings that the project for the *Annexation of Texas* has been sanctioned by Congress. The remarks in the text on "the extent of empire" had reference only to that legitimate extent which might grow out of the peaceful settlement and civilization of a territory, sufficiently ample certainly, that already belongs to us. The craving for foreign acquisitions has ever been a most fatal symptom in the history of republics; but when these acquisitions are made, as in the present instance, in contempt of constitutional law and in disregard of the great principles of international justice, the evil assumes a tenfold

both, however important in themselves, have lost much of their dignity and interest. Of these two narratives, the former, although less momentous than the latter, is most difficult to treat.

It is not that the historian is called on to pry into the dark recesses of antiquity, the twilight of civilization, mystifying and magnifying every object to the senses, nor to unravel some poetical mythology, hanging its metaphorical allusions around every thing in nature, mingling fact with fiction, the material with the spiritual, until the honest inquirer after truth may fold his arms in despair before he can cry εὕρηκα; nor is he compelled to unroll musty, worm-eaten parchments, and dusty tomes in venerable black letter, of the good times of honest Caxton and Winken de Worde, nor to go about gleaning traditionary tales and ballads in some obsolete provincial *patois*. The record is plain and legible, and he need never go behind it. The antiquity of his story goes but little more than two centuries back,—a very modern antiquity. The commencement of it was not in the dark ages, but in a period of illumination,—an age yet glowing with the imagination of Shakspeare and Spenser, the philosophy of Bacon, the learning of Coke and of Hooker. The early pas-

magnitude; for it flows not so much from the single act as from the principle on which it rests, and which may open the way to the indefinite perpetration of such acts. In glancing my eye over the text at this gloomy moment, and considering its general import, I was unwilling to let it go into the world with my name to it, without entering my protest, in common with so many better and wiser in our country, against a measure which every friend of freedom, both at home and abroad, may justly lament as the most serious shock yet given to the stability of our glorious institutions.

sages of his story—coeval with Hampden and Milton and Sidney—belong to the times in which the same struggle for the rights of conscience was going on in the land of our fathers as in our own. There was no danger that the light of the Pilgrim should be hid under a bushel, or that there should be any dearth of chronicler or bard—such as they were—to record his sacrifice. And fortunate for us that it was so, since in this way every part of this great enterprise, from its conception to its consummation, is brought into the light of day. We are put in possession not merely of the action, but of the motives which led to it, and, as to the character of the actors, are enabled to do justice to those who, if we pronounce from their actions only, would seem not always careful to do justice to themselves.

The embarrassment of the Colonial history arises from the difficulty of obtaining a central point of interest among so many petty states, each independent of the others, and all at the same time so dependent on a foreign one as to impair the historic dignity which attaches to great, powerful, and self-regulated communities. This embarrassment must be overcome by the author's detecting, and skilfully keeping before the reader, some great principle of action, if such exist, that may give unity and, at the same time, importance to the theme. Such a principle did exist in that tendency to independence, which, however feeble till fanned by the breath of persecution into a blaze, was nevertheless the vivifying principle, as before remarked, of our ante-revolutionary annals.

Whoever has dipped much into historical reading is aware how few have succeeded in weaving an harmonious tissue from the motley and tangled skein of general history. The most fortunate illustration of this within our recollection is Sismondi's "Républiques Italiennes," a work in sixteen volumes, in which the author has brought on the stage all the various governments of Italy for a thousand years, and in almost every variety of combination. Yet there is a pervading principle in this great mass of apparently discordant interests. That principle was the rise and decline of liberty. It is the key-note to every revolution that occurs. It gives an harmonious tone to the many-colored canvas, which would else have offended by its glaring contrasts and the startling violence of its transitions. The reader is interested in spite of the transitions, but knows not the cause. This is the skill of the great artist. So true is this, that the same author has been able to concentrate what may be called the essence of his bulky history into a single volume, in which he confines himself to the development of the animating principle of his narrative, stripped of all the superfluous accessories, under the significant title of "Rise, Progress, and Decline of Italian Freedom."

This embarrassment has not been easy to overcome by the writers of our Colonial annals. The first volume of Marshall's "Life of Washington" has great merit as a wise and comprehensive survey of this early period, but the plan is too limited to afford room for any thing like a satisfactory

fulness of detail. The most thorough work, and incomparably the best, on the subject, previous to the appearance of Mr. Bancroft's, is the well-known history by Mr. Grahame,* a truly valuable book, in which the author, though a foreigner, has shown himself capable of appreciating the motives and comprehending the institutions of our Puritan ancestors. He has spared no pains in the investigation of such original sources as were at his command, and has conducted his inquiries with much candor, manifesting throughout the spirit of a scholar and a gentleman. It is not very creditable to his countrymen that they should have received his labors with the apathy which he tells us they have, amid the ocean of contemptible trash with which their press is daily deluged. But, in truth, the Colonial and Revolutionary story of this country is a theme too ungrateful to British ears for us to be astonished at any insensibility on this score.

Mr. Grahame's work, however, with all its merit, is the work of a *foreigner,* and that word comprehends much that cannot be overcome by the best writer. He may produce a beautiful composition, faultless in style, accurate in the delineation of prominent events, full of sound logic and most wise conclusions, but he cannot enter into the sympathies, comprehend all the minute feelings, prejudices, and peculiar ways of thinking, which

* "The History of the Rise and Progress of the United States of North America from their Colonization till the Declaration of Independence," by James Grahame, an almost forgotten book, and yet one of the best histories of the Colonial period. Mr. Grahame was a Scotchman.—M.

form the idiosyncrasy of the nation. What can he know of these who has never been warmed by the same sun, lingered among the same scenes, listened to the same tales in childhood, been pledged to the same interests in manhood by which these fancies are nourished,—the loves, the hates, the hopes, the fears, that go to form national character? Write as he will, he is still an alien, speaking a tongue in which the nation will detect the foreign accent. He may produce a book without a blemish in the eyes of foreigners; it may even contain much for the instruction of the native that he would not be likely to find in his own literature; but it will afford evidence on every page of its exotic origin. Botta's "History of the War of the Revolution" is the best treatise yet compiled of that event. It is, as every one knows, a most classical and able work, doing justice to most of the great heroes and actions of the period; but, we will venture to say, no well-informed American ever turned over its leaves without feeling that the writer was not nourished among the men and the scenes he is painting. With all its great merits, it cannot be, at least for Americans, *the* history of the Revolution.

It is the same as in portrait-painting. The artist may catch the prominent lineaments, the complexion, the general air, the peculiar costume of his subject,—all that a stranger's eye will demand; but he must not hope, unless he has had much previous intimacy with the sitter, to transfer those fleeting shades of expression, the almost imper-

ceptible play of features, which are revealed to the eye of his own family.

Who would think of looking to a Frenchman for a history of England? to an Englishman for the best history of France?* Ill fares it with the nation that cannot find writers of genius to tell its own story. What foreign hand could have painted like Herodotus and Thucydides the achievements of the Greeks? who like Livy and Tacitus have portrayed the shifting character of the Roman in his rise, meridian, and decline? Had the Greeks trusted their story to these same Romans, what would have been their fate with posterity? Let the Carthaginians tell. All that remains of this nation, the proud rival of Rome, who once divided with her the empire of the Mediterranean and surpassed her in commerce and civilization,—nearly all that now remains to indicate her character is a poor proverb, *Punica fides*, a brand of infamy given by the Roman historian, and one which the Romans merited probably as richly as the Carthaginians. Yet America, it is too true, must go to Italy for the best history of the Revolution, and to Scotland for the best history of the Colonies. Happily, the work before us bids fair, when completed, to supply this deficiency; and it is quite time we should turn to it.

Mr. Bancroft's first two volumes have been too long before the public to require any thing to be now said of them. Indeed, the first has already

* Yet Prescott had already published what is still admitted to be the best history of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, in Spain, when he penned those lines.—M.

been the subject of a particular notice in this Journal. These volumes are mainly occupied with the settlement of the country by the different colonies, and the institutions gradually established among them, with a more particular illustration of the remarkable features in their character or policy.

In the present volume the immediate point of view is somewhat changed. It was no longer necessary to treat each of the colonies separately, and a manifest advantage in respect to unity is gained by their being brought more under one aspect. A more prominent feature is gradually developed by the relations with the mother-country. This is the mercantile system, as it is called by economical writers, which distinguishes the colonial policy of modern Europe from that of ancient. The great object of this system was to get as much profit from the colonies, with as little cost to the mother-country, as possible. The former, instead of being regarded as an integral part of the empire, were held as property, to be dealt with for the benefit of the proprietors. This was the great object of legislation, almost the sole one. The system, so different from any thing known in antiquity, was introduced by the Spaniards and Portuguese, and by them carried to an extent which no other nation has cared to follow. By the most cruel and absurd system of prohibitory legislation, their colonies were cut off from intercourse with all but the parent country; and, as the latter was unable to supply their demands for even the necessaries of life, an extensive contraband trade was introduced, which, without satisfying

the wants of the colonies, corrupted their morals. It is an old story, and the present generation has witnessed the results, in the ruin of those fine countries and the final assertion of their independence, which the degraded condition in which they have so long been held has wholly unfitted them to enjoy.

The English government was too wise and liberal to press thus heavily on its transatlantic subjects; but the policy was similar, consisting, as is well known, and is ably delineated in these volumes, of a long series of restrictive measures, tending to cramp their free trade, manufactures, and agriculture, and to secure the commercial monopoly of Great Britain. This is the point from which events in the present volume are to be more immediately contemplated, all subordinate, like those in the preceding, to that leading principle of a republican tendency,—the centre of attraction, controlling the movements of the numerous satellites in our colonial system.

The introductory chapter in the volume opens with a view of the English Revolution in 1688, which, though not popular, is rightly characterized as leading the way to popular liberty. Its great object was the security of property; and our author has traced its operation, in connection with the gradual progress of commercial wealth, to give greater authority to the mercantile system. We select the following original sketch of the character of William the Third:

"The character of the new monarch of Great Britain could mould its policy, but not its Consti-

tution. True to his purposes, he yet wins no sympathy. In political sagacity, in force of will, far superior to the English statesmen who environed him, more tolerant than his ministers or his Parliaments, the childless man seems like the unknown character in algebra, which is introduced to form the equation and dismissed when the problem is solved. In his person thin and feeble, with eyes of a hectic lustre, of a temperament inclining to the melancholic, in conduct cautious, of a self-relying humor, with abiding impressions respecting men, he sought no favor, and relied for success on his own inflexibility and the greatness and maturity of his designs. Too wise to be cajoled, too firm to be complaisant, no address could sway his resolve. In Holland he had not scrupled to derive an increased power from the crimes of rioters and assassins; in England, no filial respect diminished the energy of his ambition. His exterior was chilling; yet he had a passionate delight in horses and the chase. In conversation he was abrupt, speaking little and slowly, and with repulsive dryness; in the day of battle he was all activity, and the highest energy of life, without kindling his passions, animated his frame. His trust in Providence was so connected with faith in general laws that in every action he sought the principle which should range it on an absolute decree. Thus, unconscious to himself, he had sympathy with the people, who always have faith in Providence. 'Do you dread death in my company?' he cried to the anxious sailors, when the ice on the coast of Holland had almost crushed the boat that was bearing

him to the shore. Courage and pride pervaded the reserve of the prince who, spurning an alliance with a bastard daughter of Louis XIV., had made himself the centre of a gigantic opposition to France. For England, for the English people, for English liberties, he had no affection, indifferently employing the Whigs, who found their pride in the Revolution, and the Tories, who had opposed his elevation, and who yet were the fittest instruments 'to carry the prerogative high.' One great passion had absorbed his breast,—the independence of his native country. The harsh encroachments of Louis XIV., which in 1672 had made William of Orange a Revolutionary stadtholder, now assisted to constitute him a Revolutionary king, transforming the impassive champion of Dutch independence into the defender of the liberties of Europe."—Vol. iii. pp. 2–4.

The chapter proceeds to examine the relations, not always of the most friendly aspect, between England and the colonies, in which Mr. Bancroft pays a well-merited tribute to the enlightened policy of Penn and the tranquillity he secured to his settlement. At the close of the chapter is an account of that lamentable—farce, we should have called it, had it not so tragic a conclusion—the Salem witchcraft.

Our author has presented some very striking sketches of these deplorable scenes, in which poor human nature appears in as humiliating a plight as would be possible in a civilized country. The Inquisition, fierce as it was, and most unrelenting in its persecutions, had something in it respectable

in comparison with this wretched and imbecile self-delusion. The historian does not shrink from distributing his censure in full measure to those to whom he thinks it belongs. The erudite divine, Cotton Mather, in particular, would feel little pleasure in the contemplation of the portrait sketched for him on this occasion. Vanity, according to Mr. Bancroft, was quite as active an incentive to his movements as religious zeal; and, if he began with the latter, there seems no reason to doubt that pride of opinion, an unwillingness to expose his error, so humiliating to the world, perhaps even to his own heart, were powerful stimulants to his continuing the course he had begun, though others faltered in it.

Mr. Bancroft has taken some pains to show that the prosecutions were conducted before magistrates not appointed by the people, but the crown, and that a stop was not put to them till after the meeting of the representatives of the people. This, in our view, is a distinction somewhat fanciful. The judges held their commissions from the governor; and if he was appointed by the crown it was, as our author admits, at the suggestion of Increase Mather, a minister of the people. The accusers, the witnesses, the jurors, were all taken from the people. And when a stop was put to farther proceedings by the seasonable delay interposed by the General Court, before the assembling of the "legal colonial" tribunal (thus giving time for the illusion to subside), it was, in part, from the apprehension that, in the rising tide of accusation, no man, however elevated might be his character or condition, would be safe.

In the following chapter, after a full exposition of the prominent features in the system of commercial monopoly which controlled the affairs of the colonies, we are introduced to the great discoveries in the northern and western regions of the continent, made by the Jesuit missionaries of France. Nothing is more extraordinary in the history of this remarkable order than their bold enterprise in spreading their faith over this boundless wilderness, in defiance of the most appalling obstacles which man and nature could present. Faith and zeal triumphed over all, and, combined with science and the spirit of adventure, laid open unknown regions in the heart of this vast continent, then roamed over by the buffalo and the savage, and now alive with the busy hum of an industrious and civilized population.

The historian has diligently traced the progress of the missionaries in their journeys into the western territory of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, down the deep basin of the Mississippi to its mouth. He has identified the scenes of some striking events in the history of discovery, as, among others, the place where Marquette first met the Illinois tribe, at Iowa. No preceding writer has brought into view the results of these labors in a compass which may be embraced, as it were, in a single glance. The character of this order,* and their fortune, form one of the most remarkable objects for contemplation in the history of man. Springing up, as it were, to prop the crumbling

* "The Society of Jesus" stopped the reform movement in the German lands and brought about the "Counter Reformation."—M.

edifice of Catholicism when it was reeling under the first shock of the Reformation, it took up its residence indifferently within the precincts of palaces or in the boundless plains and forests of the wilderness, held the consciences of civilized monarchs in its keeping, and directed their counsels, while at the same time it was gathering barbarian nations under its banners and pouring the light of civilization into the farthest and darkest quarters of the globe.

"The establishment of 'the Society of Jesus,'" says Mr. Bancroft, "by Loyola had been contemporary with the Reformation, of which it was designed to arrest the progress, and its complete organization belongs to the period when the first full edition of Calvin's 'Institutes' saw the light. Its members were, by its rules, never to become prelates, and could gain power and distinction only by influence over mind. Their vows were poverty, chastity, absolute obedience, and a constant readiness to go on missions against heresy or heathenism. Their cloisters became the best schools in the world. Emancipated, in a great degree, from the forms of piety, separated from domestic ties, constituting a community essentially intellectual as well as essentially plebeian, bound together by the most perfect organization, and having for their end a control over opinion among the scholars and courts of Europe and throughout the habitable globe, the order of the Jesuits held as its ruling maxims the widest diffusion of its influence, and the closest internal unity. Immediately on its institution, their missionaries, kind-

ling with a heroism that defied every danger and endured every toil, made their way to the ends of the earth; they raised the emblem of man's salvation on the Moluccas, in Japan, in India, in Thibet, in Cochin China, and in China; they penetrated Ethiopia, and reached the Abyssinians; they planted missions among the Caffres; in California, on the banks of the Maranhon, in the plains of Paraguay, they invited the wildest of barbarians to the civilization of Christianity."

"Religious enthusiasm," he adds, "colonized New England; and religious enthusiasm founded Montreal, made a conquest of the wilderness on the upper Lakes, and explored the Mississippi. Puritanism gave New England its worship and its schools; the Roman Church created for Canada its altars, its hospitals, and its seminaries. The influence of Calvin * can be traced to every New England village; in Canada, the monuments of feudalism and the Catholic Church stand side by side, and the names of Montmorenci and Bourbon, of Levi and Condé, are mingled with memorials of St. Athanasius and Augustin, of St. Francis of Assisi and Ignatius Loyola."—*Ibid.*, pp. 120, 121.

We hardly know which to select from the many brilliant and spirited sketches in which this part of the story abounds. None has more interest, on the whole, than the discovery of the Mississippi by Marquette and his companions, and the first

* It is to the influence of Calvin that the New England "Town Meeting" is due. Where Calvinism did not dominate in America such a system of government is unknown.—M.

voyage of the white men down its majestic waters:

"Behold, then, in 1673, on the tenth day of June, the meek, single-hearted, unpretending, illustrious Marquette, with Joliet for his associate, five Frenchmen as his companions, and two Algonquins as guides, lifting their two canoes on their backs and walking across the narrow portage that divides the Fox River from the Wisconsin. They reach the water-shed; uttering a special prayer to the immaculate Virgin, they leave the streams that, flowing onward, could have borne their greetings to the Castle of Quebec; already they stand by the Wisconsin. 'The guides returned,' says the gentle Marquette, 'leaving us alone in this unknown land, in the hands of Providence.' France and Christianity stood in the Valley of the Mississippi. Embarking on the broad Wisconsin, the discoverers, as they sailed west, went solitarily down the stream, between alternate prairies and hill-sides, beholding neither man nor the wonted beasts of the forest: no sound broke the appalling silence but the ripple of their canoe and the lowing of the buffalo. In seven days 'they entered happily the Great River, with a joy that could not be expressed;' and the two birch-bark canoes, raising their happy sails under new skies and to unknown breezes, floated gently down the calm magnificence of the ocean stream, over the broad, clear sand-bars, the resort of innumerable water-fowl,—gliding past islands that swelled from the bosom of the stream, with their tufts of massive thickets, and between the wide plains of Illinois and Iowa, all garlanded as they were with majestic forests,

or checkered by island grove and the open vastness of the prairie.

"About sixty leagues below the mouth of the Wisconsin, the western bank of the Mississippi bore on its sands the trail of men; a little footpath was discerned leading into a beautiful prairie; and, leaving the canoes, Joliet and Marquette resolved alone to brave a meeting with the savages. After walking six miles, they beheld a village on the banks of a river, and two others on a slope, at a distance of a mile and a half from the first. The river was the Mou-in-gou-e-na, or Moingona, of which we have corrupted the name into Des Moines. Marquette and Joliet were the first white men who trod the soil of Iowa. Commending themselves to God, they uttered a loud cry. The Indians hear; four old men advance slowly to meet them, bearing the peace-pipe brilliant with many-colored plumes. 'We are Illinois,' said they; that is, when translated, 'We are men;' and they offered the calumet. An aged chief received them at his cabin with upraised hands, exclaiming, 'How beautiful is the sun, Frenchmen, when thou comest to visit us! Our whole village awaits thee; thou shalt enter in peace into all our dwellings.' And the pilgrims were followed by the devouring gaze of an astonished crowd.

"At the great council, Marquette published to them the one true God, their creator. He spoke, also, of the great captain of the French, the Governor of Canada, who had chastised the Five Nations and commanded peace; and he questioned them respecting the Mississippi and the tribes

that possessed its banks. For the messengers who announced the subjection of the Iroquois, a magnificent festival was prepared of hominy, and fish, and the choicest viands from the prairies.

"After six days' delay, and invitations to new visits, the chieftain of the tribe, with hundreds of warriors, attended the strangers to their canoes; and, selecting a peace-pipe embellished with the head and neck of brilliant birds and all feathered over with plumage of various hues, they hung around Marquette the mysterious arbiter of peace and war, the sacred calumet, a safeguard among the nations.

"The little group proceeded onward. 'I did not fear death,' says Marquette; 'I should have esteemed it the greatest happiness to have died for the glory of God.' They passed the perpendicular rocks, which wore the appearance of monsters; they heard at a distance the noise of the waters of the Missouri, known to them by the Algonquin name of Pekitanoni; and when they came to the most beautiful confluence of waters in the world —where the swifter Missouri rushes like a conqueror into the calmer Mississippi, dragging it, as it were, hastily to the sea—the good Marquette resolved in his heart, anticipating Lewis and Clarke, one day to ascend the mighty river to its source, to cross the ridge that divides the oceans, and, descending a westerly-flowing stream, to publish the gospel to all the people of this New World.

"In a little less than forty leagues, the canoes floated past the Ohio, which was then, and long afterward, called the Wabash. Its banks were

tenanted by numerous villages of the peaceful Shawnees, who quailed under the incursions of the Iroquois.

"The thick canes begin to appear so close and strong that the buffalo could not break through them; the insects become intolerable; as a shelter against the suns of July, the sails are folded into an awning. The prairies vanish; thick forests of whitewood, admirable for their vastness and height, crowd even to the skirts of the pebbly shore. It is also observed that, in the land of the Chickasas, the Indians have guns.

"Near the latitude of thirty-three degrees, on the western bank of the Mississippi, stood the village of Mitchigamea, in a region that had not been visited by Europeans since the days of De Soto. 'Now,' thought Marquette, 'we must indeed ask the aid of the Virgin.' Armed with bows and arrows, with clubs, axes, and bucklers, amid continual whoops, the natives, bent on war, embark in vast canoes made out of the trunks of hollow trees; but, at the sight of the mysterious peace-pipe held aloft, God touched the hearts of the old men, who checked the impetuosity of the young, and, throwing their bows and quivers into the canoes as a token of peace, they prepared a hospitable welcome.

"The next day, a long wooden canoe, containing ten men, escorted the discoverers, for eight or ten leagues, to the village of Akansea, the limit of their voyage. They had left the region of the Algonquins, and, in the midst of the Sioux and Chickasas, could speak only by an interpreter. A

half-league above Akansea they were met by two boats, in one of which stood the commander, holding in his hand the peace-pipe, and singing as he drew near. After offering the pipe, he gave bread of maize. The wealth of his tribe consisted in buffalo-skins; their weapons were axes of steel, —a proof of commerce with Europeans.

"Thus had our travellers descended below the entrance of the Arkansas, to the genial climes that have almost no winter but rains, beyond the bound of the Huron and Algonquin languages, to the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico, and to tribes of Indians that had obtained European arms by traffic with Spaniards or with Virginia.

"So, having spoken of God and the mysteries of the Catholic faith, having become certain that the Father of Rivers went not to the ocean east of Florida, nor yet to the Gulf of California, Marquette and Joliet left Akansea and ascended the Mississippi.

"At the thirty-eighth degree of latitude they entered the river Illinois, and discovered a country without its paragon for the fertility of its beautiful prairies, covered with buffaloes and stags; for the loveliness of its rivulets, and the prodigal abundance of wild duck and swans, and of a species of parrots and wild turkeys. The tribe of Illinois, that tenanted its banks, entreated Marquette to come and reside among them. One of their chiefs, with their young men, conducted the party, by way of Chicago, to Lake Michigan; and before the end of September all were safe in Green Bay.

"Joliet returned to Quebec to announce the dis-

covery, of which the fame, through Talon, quickened the ambition of Colbert; the unaspiring Marquette remained to preach the gospel to the Miamis, who dwelt in the north of Illinois, round Chicago. Two years afterward, sailing from Chicago to Mackinaw, he entered a little river in Michigan. Erecting an altar, he said mass after the rites of the Catholic Church; then, begging the men who conducted his canoe to leave him alone for half an hour,

> 'in the darkling wood,
> Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down,
> And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
> And supplication.'

At the end of the half-hour they went to seek him, and he was no more. The good missionary, discoverer of a world, had fallen asleep on the margin of the stream that bears his name. Near its mouth the canoe-men dug his grave in the sand. Ever after, the forest rangers, if in danger on Lake Michigan, would invoke his name. The people of the West will build his monument."—*Ibid.*, pp. 157–162.

The list of heroic adventurers in the path of discovery is closed by La Salle, the chivalrous Frenchman of whom we have made particular record in a previous number of this Journal,* and whose tremendous journey from the Illinois to the French settlements in Canada, a distance of fifteen hundred miles, is also noticed by Mr. Bancroft. His was the first European bark that emerged from the mouth of the Mississippi; and

* See "North American Review," vol. xlviii. p. 69, *et seq.*

Mr. Bancroft, as he notices the event, and the feelings it gave rise to in the mind of the discoverer, gives utterance to his own in language truly sublime:

"As he raised the cross by the Arkansas, as he planted the arms of France near the Gulf of Mexico, he anticipated the future affluence of emigrants, and heard in the distance the footsteps of the advancing multitude that were coming to take possession of the valley."—*Ibid.*, p. 168.

This descent of the Great River our author places, without hesitation, in 1682, being a year earlier than the one assigned by us in the article referred to.* Mr. Bancroft is so familiar with the whole ground, and has studied the subject so carefully, that great weight is due to his opinions; but he has not explained the precise authority for his conclusions in this particular.

This leads us to enlarge on what we consider a defect in our author's present plan. His notes are discarded altogether, and his references transferred from the bottom of the page to the side-margin. This is very objectionable, not merely on account of the disagreeable effect produced on the eye, but from the more serious inconvenience of want of room for very frequent and accurate reference. Titles are necessarily much abridged, sometimes at the expense of perspicuity. The first reference in this volume is "Hallam, iv. 374;" the second is "Archdale." Now Hallam has written several works, published in various forms and editions. As to the second authority, we have

* Ibid., pp. 84, 85.

no means of identifying the passage at all. This, however, is not the habit of Mr. Bancroft where the fact is of any great moment, and his references throughout are abundant. But the practice of references in the side-margin, though warranted by high authority, is unfavorable, from want of room, for very frequent or very minute specification.

The omission of notes we consider a still greater evil. It is true, they lead to great abuses, are often the vehicle of matter which should have been incorporated in the text, more frequently of irrelevant matter which should not have been admitted anywhere, and thus exhaust the reader's patience, while they spoil the effect of the work by drawing the attention from the continuous flow of the narrative, checking the heat that is raised by it in the reader's mind, and not unfrequently jarring on his feelings by some misplaced witticism or smart attempt at one. For these and the like reasons, many competent critics have pronounced against the use of notes, considering that a writer who could not bring all he had to say into the compass of his text was a bungler. Gibbon, who practiced the contrary, intimates a regret in one of his letters that he had been overruled so far as to allow his notes to be printed at the bottom of the page instead of being removed to the end of the volume. But from all this we dissent, especially in reference to a work of research like the present History. We are often desirous here to have the assertion of the author, or the sentiment quoted by him, if important, verified by the original extract, especially when this is in a for-

eign language. We want to see the grounds of his conclusions, the scaffolding by which he has raised his structure; to estimate the true value of his authorities; to know something of their characters, positions in society, and the probable influences to which they were exposed. Where there is contradiction, we want to see it stated, the *pros* and the *cons*, and the grounds for rejecting this and admitting that We want to have a reason for our faith, otherwise we are merely led blindfold.

Our guide may be an excellent guide; he may have travelled over the path till it has become a beaten track to him; but we like to use our own eyesight too, to observe somewhat for ourselves, and to know, if possible, why he has taken this particular road in preference to that which his predecessors have travelled.

The objections made to notes are founded rather on the abuse than on the proper use of them. Gibbon only wished to remove his own to the end of his volume; though in this we think he erred, from the difficulty and frequent disappointment which the reader must have experienced in consulting them,—a disappointment of little moment when unattended by difficulty. But Gibbon knew too well the worth of this part of his labors to him to wish to discard them altogether. He knew his reputation stood on them as intimately as on his narrative. Indeed, they supply a body of criticism, and well-selected, well-digested learning, which of itself would make the reputation of any scholar. Many accomplished writers,

however, and Mr. Bancroft among the number, have come to a different conclusion; and he has formed his, probably, with deliberation, having made the experiment in both forms.

It is true, the fulness of the extracts from original sources with which his text is inlaid, giving such life and presence to it, and the frequency of his references, supersede much of the necessity of notes. We should have been very glad of one, however, of the kind we are speaking of, at the close of his expedition of La Salle.

We have no room for the discussion of the topics in the next chapter, relating to the hostilities for the acquisition of colonial territory between France and England, each of them pledged to the same system of commercial monopoly, but must pass to the author's account of the aborigines east of the Mississippi. In this division of his subject he brings into view the geographical positions of the numerous tribes, their languages, social institutions, religious faith, and probable origin. All these copious topics are brought within the compass of a hundred pages, arranged with great harmony, and exhibited with perspicuity and singular richness of expression. It is, on the whole, the most elaborate and finished portion of the volume.

His remarks on the localities of the tribes, instead of a barren muster-roll of names, are constantly enlivened by picturesque details connected with their situation. His strictures on their various languages are conceived in a philosophical spirit. The subject is one that has already em-

ployed the pens of the ablest philologists in this country, among whom it is only necessary to mention the names of Du Ponceau, Pickering, and Gallatin. Our author has evidently bestowed much labor and thought on the topic. He examines the peculiar structure of the languages, which, though radically different, bear a common resemblance in their compounded and synthetic organization. He has omitted to notice the singular exception to the polysynthetic formation of the Indian languages presented by the Otomie, which has afforded a Mexican philologist so ingenious a parallel, in its structure, with the Chinese. Mr. Bancroft concludes his review of them by admitting the copiousness of their combinations, and by inferring that this copiousness is no evidence of care and cultivation, but the elementary form of expression of a rude and uncivilized people; in proof of which he cites the example of the partially civilized Indian in accommodating his idiom gradually to the analytic structure of the European languages. May not this be explained by the circumstance that the influence under which he makes this, like his other changes, is itself European? But we pass to a more popular theme, the religious faith of the red man, whose fanciful superstitions are depicted by our author with highly poetical coloring:

"The red man, unaccustomed to generalization, obtained no conception of an absolute substance, of a self-existent being, but saw a divinity in every power. Wherever there was being, motion, or action, there to him was a spirit; and, in

a special manner, wherever there appeared singular excellence among beasts or birds, or in the creation, there to him was the presence of a divinity. When he feels his pulse throb or his heart beat, he knows that it is a spirit. A god resides in the flint, to give forth the kindling, cheering fire; a spirit resides in the mountain-cliff; a spirit makes its abode in the cool recesses of the grottoes which nature has adorned; a god dwells in each 'little grass' that springs miraculously from the earth. 'The woods, the wilds, and the waters respond to savage intelligence; the stars and the mountains live; the river, and the lake, and the waves have a spirit.' Every hidden agency, every mysterious influence, is personified. A god dwells in the sun, and in the moon, and in the firmament; the spirit of the morning reddens in the eastern sky; a deity is present in the ocean and in the fire; the crag that overhangs the river has its genius; there is a spirit to the waterfall; a household god dwells in the Indian's wigwam and consecrates his home; spirits climb upon the forhead to weigh down the eyelids in sleep. Not the heavenly bodies only, the sky is filled with spirits that minister to man. To the savage, divinity, broken as it were into an infinite number of fragments, fills all place and all being. The idea of unity in the creation may exist contemporaneously, but it existed only in the germ, or as a vague belief derived from the harmony of the universe. Yet faith in the Great Spirit, when once presented, was promptly seized and appropriated, and so infused itself into the hearts of remotest tribes

that it came to be often considered as a portion of their original faith. Their shadowy aspirations and creeds assumed, through the reports of missionaries, a more complete development, and a religious system was elicited from the pregnant but rude materials."—*Ibid.*, pp. 285, 286.

The following pictures of the fate of the Indian infant, and the shadowy pleasures of the land of spirits, have also much tenderness and beauty:

"The same motive prompted them to bury with the warrior his pipe and his manitou, his tomahawk, quiver, and bow ready bent for action, and his most splendid apparel; to place by his side his bowl, his maize, and his venison, for the long journey to the country of his ancestors. Festivals in honor of the dead were also frequent, when a part of the food was given to the flames, that so it might serve to nourish the departed. The traveller would find in the forests a dead body placed on a scaffold erected upon piles, carefully wrapped in bark for its shroud, and attired in warmest furs. If a mother lost her babe, she would cover it with bark and envelop it anxiously in the softest beaver-skins; at the burial-place she would put by its side its cradle, its beads, and its rattles, and, as a last service of maternal love, would draw milk from her bosom in a cup of bark, and burn it in the fire, that her infant might still find nourishment on its solitary journey to the land of shades. Yet the new-born babe would be buried, not, as usual, on the scaffold, but by the wayside, so that its spirit might secretly steal into the bosom of some passing matron and be born again under

happier auspices. On burying her daughter, the Chippewa mother adds, not snow-shoes and beads and moccasins only, but (sad emblem of woman's lot in the wilderness) the carrying-belt and the paddle. 'I know my daughter will be restored to me,' she once said, as she clipped a lock of hair as a memorial; 'by this lock of hair I shall discover her, for I shall take it with me;' alluding to the day when she too, with her carrying-belt and paddle, and the little relic of her child, should pass through the grave to the dwelling-place of her ancestors."

"The faith, as well as the sympathies, of the savage, descended also to inferior things. Of each kind of animal they say there exists one, the source and origin of all, of a vast size, the type and original of the whole class. From the immense invisible beaver come all the beavers, by whatever run of water they are found; the same is true of the elk and buffalo, of the eagle and robin, of the meanest quadruped of the forest, of the smallest insect that buzzes in the air. There lives for each class of animals this invisible vast type or elder brother. Thus the savage established his right to be classed by philosophers in the rank of Realists, and his chief efforts at generalization was a reverent exercise of the religious sentiment. Where these older brothers dwell they do not exactly know; yet it may be that the giant manitous which are brothers to beasts are hid beneath the waters, and those of the birds make their homes in the blue sky. But the Indian believes also of each individual animal that it possesses the mysterious, the inde-

structible principle of life; there is not a breathing thing but has its shade, which never can perish. Regarding himself, in comparison with other animals, but as the first among co-ordinate existence, he respects the brute creation, and assigns to it, as to himself, a perpetuity of being. 'The ancients of these lands believed that the warrior, when released from life, renews the passions and activity of this world ; is seated once more among his friends; shares again the joyous feast; walks through shadowy forests, that are alive with the spirits of birds; and there, in his paradise,

> "'By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews,
> In vestments for the chase arrayed,
> The hunter still the deer pursues,
> The hunter and the deer a shade.'"
> *Ibid.*, pp. 295, 298.

At the close of this chapter the historian grapples with the much-vexed question respecting the origin of the aborigines,—that *pons asinorum* which has called forth so much sense and nonsense on both sides of the water, and will continue to do so as long as a new relic or unknown hieroglyphic shall turn up to irritate the nerves of the antiquary.

Mr. Bancroft passes briefly in review the several arguments adduced in favor of the connection with Eastern Asia. He lays no stress on the affinity of languages or of customs and religious notions, considering these as spontaneous expressions of similar ideas and wants in similar conditions of society. He attaches as little value to the resemblance established by Humboldt between the signs of the Mexican calendar and those of the

signs of the zodiac in Thibet and Tartary; and as for the far-famed Dighton Rock, and the learned lucubrations thereon, he sets them down as so much moonshine, pronouncing the characters Algonquin. The *tumuli*—the great tumuli of the West—he regards as the work of no mortal hand, except so far as they have been excavated for a sepulchral purpose. He admits, however, vestiges of a migratory movement on our continent from the northeast to the southwest, shows very satisfactorily, by estimating the distances of the intervening islands, the practicability of a passage in the most ordinary sea-boat from the Asiatic to the American shores in the high latitudes, and, by a comparison of the Indian and Mongolian skulls, comes to the conclusion that the two races are probably identical in origin. But the epoch of their divergence he places at so remote a period that the peculiar habits, institutions, and culture of the aborigines must be regarded as all their own,—as indigenous. This is the outline of his theory.

By this hypothesis he extricates the question from the embarrassment caused by the ignorance which the aborigines have manifested in the use of iron and milk, known to the Mongol hordes, but which he, of course, supposes were not known at the time of the migration. This is carrying the exodus back to a far period. But the real objection seems to be that by thus rejecting all evidence of communication but that founded on anatomical resemblance he has unnecessarily narrowed the basis on which it rests. The resemblance between a

few specimens of Mongolian and American skulls is a narrow basis indeed, taken as the only one, for so momentous a theory.

In fact, this particular point of analogy does not strike us as by any means the most powerful of the arguments in favor of a communication with the East, when we consider the small number of the specimens on which it is founded, the great variety of formation in individuals of the same family,—some of the specimens approaching even nearer to the Caucasian than the Mongolian,—and the very uniform deviation from the latter in the prominence and the greater angularity of the features.

This connection with the East derives, in our judgment, some support, feeble though it be, from affinities of language; but this is a field which remains to be much more fully explored. The analogy is much more striking of certain usages and institutions, particularly of a religious character, and, above all, the mythological traditions which those who have had occasion to look into the Aztec antiquities cannot fail to be struck with. This resemblance is oftentimes in matters so purely arbitrary that it can hardly be regarded as founded in the constitution of man, so very exact that it can scarcely be considered as accidental. We give up the Dighton Rock, that rock of offence to so many antiquaries, who may read in it the handwriting of the Phœnicians, Egyptians, or Scandinavians, quite as well as anything else. Indeed, the various *fac-similes* of it, made for the benefit of the learned, are so different from one

another that, like Sir Hudibras, one may find in it

"A leash of languages at once."

We are agreed with our author that it is very good Algonquin. But the zodiac, the Tartar zodiac, which M. de Humboldt has so well shown to resemble in its terms those of the Aztec calendar, we cannot so easily surrender. The striking coincidence established by his investigations between the astronomical signs of the two nations—in a similar corresponding series, moreover, although applied to different uses—is, in our opinion, one of the most powerful arguments yet adduced for the affinity of the two races. Nor is Mr. Bancroft wholly right in supposing that the Asiatic hieroglyphics referred only to the zodiac. Like the Mexican, they also presided over the years, days, and even hours. The strength of evidence, founded on numerous analogies, cannot be shown without going into details, for which there is scarce room in the compass of a separate article, much less in the heel of one. Whichever way we turn, the subject is full of perplexity. It is the sphinx's riddle, and the Œdipus must be called from the grave who is to solve it.

In closing our remarks, we must express our satisfaction that the favorable notice we took of Mr. Bancroft's labors on his first appearance has been fully ratified by his countrymen, and that his Colonial History establishes his title to a place among the great historical writers of the age. The reader will find the pages of the present volume filled with matter not less interesting and impor-

tant than the preceding. He will meet with the same brilliant and daring style, the same picturesque sketches of character and incident, the same acute reasoning and compass of erudition.

In the delineation of events Mr. Bancroft has been guided by the spirit of historic faith. Not that it would be difficult to discern the color of his politics; nor, indeed, would it be possible for anyone strongly pledged to any set of principles, whether in politics or religion, to disguise them in the discussion of abstract topics, without being false to himself and giving a false tone to the picture; but, while he is true to himself, he has an equally imperative duty to perform,—to be true to others, to those on whose characters and conduct he sits in judgment as a historian. No pet theory nor party predilections can justify him in swerving one hair's-breadth from truth in his delineation of the mighty dead, whose portraits he is exhibiting to us on the canvas of history.

Whenever religion is introduced, Mr. Bancroft has shown a commendable spirit of liberality. Catholics and Calvinists, Jesuits, Quakers, and Church-of-England men, are all judged according to their deeds, and not their speculative tenets; and even in the latter particular he generally contrives to find something deserving of admiration, some commendable doctrine or aspiration in most of them. And what Christian sect—we might add, what sect of any denomination—is there which has not some beauty of doctrine to admire? Religion is the homage of man to his Creator. The forms in which it is expressed are infinitely va-

rious; but they flow from the same source, are directed to the same end, and all claim from the historian the benefit of toleration.

What Mr. Bancroft has done for the Colonial history is, after all, but preparation for a richer theme, the history of the War of Independence; a subject which finds its origin in the remote past, its results in the infinite future; which finds a central point of unity in the ennobling principle of independence, that gives dignity and grandeur to the most petty details of the conflict, and which has its foreground occupied by a single character, to which all others converge as to a centre,—the character of Washington, in war, in peace, and in private life the most sublime on historical record. Happy the writer who shall exhibit this theme worthily to the eyes of his countrymen!

The subject, it is understood, is to engage the attention, also, of Mr. Sparks, whose honorable labors have already associated his name imperishably with our Revolutionary period. Let it not be feared that there is not compass enough in the subject for two minds so gifted. The field is too rich to be exhausted by a single crop, and will yield fresh laurels to the skilful hand that shall toil for them. The labors of Hume did not supersede those of Lingard, or Turner, or Mackintosh, or Hallam. The history of the English Revolution has called forth, in our own time, the admirable essays of Mackintosh and Guizot; and the palm of excellence, after the libraries that have been written on the French Revolution, has just been assigned to the dissimilar histories of Mignet and

Thiers. The points of view under which a thing may be contemplated are as diversified as mind itself. The most honest inquirers after truth rarely come to precisely the same results, such is the influence of education, prejudice, principle. Truth, indeed, is single, but opinions are infinitely various, and it is only by comparing these opinions together that we can hope to ascertain what is truth.

MADAME CALDERON'S LIFE IN MEXICO *

(January, 1843)

IN the present age of high literary activity, travellers make not the least importunate demands on public attention, and their lucubrations, under whatever name, — Rambles, Notices, Incidents, Pencillings,—are nearly as important a staple for the "trade" as novels and romances. A book of travels, formerly, was a very serious affair. The traveller set out on his distant journey with many a solemn preparation, made his will, and bade adieu to his friends like one who might not again return. If he did return, the results were embodied in a respectable folio, or at least quarto, well garnished with cuts, and done up in a solid form, which argued that it was no fugitive publication, but destined for posterity.

All this is changed. The voyager nowadays leaves home with as little ceremony and leave-taking as if it were for a morning's drive. He steps into the bark that is to carry him across thousands of miles of ocean with the moral certainty of returning in a fixed week, almost at a particular day. Parties of gentlemen and ladies go whizzing along in their steamships over the track which

* "Life in Mexico, during a Residence of Two Years in that Country. By Madame C—— de la B——." Boston: Little & Brown. Two volumes, 12mo.

cost so many weary days to the Argonauts of old, and run over the choicest scenes of classic antiquity, scattered through Europe, Asia, and Africa, in less time than it formerly took to go from one end of the British Isles to the other. The Cape of Good Hope, so long the great stumbling-block to the navigators of Europe, is doubled, or the Red Sea coasted, in the same way, by the fashionable tourist—who glides along the shores of Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Bombay, and Hindostan, farther than the farthest limits of Alexander's conquests—before the last leaves of the last new novel which he has taken by the way are fairly cut. The facilities of communication have, in fact, so abridged distances that geography, as we have hitherto studied it, may be said to be entirely reformed. Instead of leagues, we now compute by hours, and we find ourselves next-door neighbors to those whom we had looked upon as at the antipodes.

The consequence of these improvements in the means of intercourse is, that all the world goes abroad, or, at least, one half is turned upon the other. Nations are so mixed up by this process that they are in some danger of losing their idiosyncrasy; and the Egyptian and the Turk, though they still cling to their religion, are becoming European in their notions and habits more and more every day.

The taste for pilgrimage, however, it must be owned, does not stop with the countries where it can be carried on with such increased facility. It has begotten a nobler spirit of adventure, some-

thing akin to what existed in the fifteenth century, when the world was new or newly discovering, and a navigator who did not take in sail, like the cautious seamen of Knickerbocker, might run down some strange continent in the dark; for in these times of dandy tourists and travel-mongers the boldest achievements, that have hitherto defied the most adventurous spirits, have been performed: the Himalaya Mountains have been scaled, the Niger ascended, the burning heart of Africa penetrated, the icy Arctic and Antarctic explored, and the mysterious monuments of the semi-civilized races of Central America have been thrown open to the public gaze. It is certain that this is a high-pressure age, and every department of science and letters, physical and mental, feels its stimulating influence.

No nation, on the whole, has contributed so largely to these itinerant expeditions as the English. Uneasy, it would seem, at being cooped up in their little isle, they sally forth in all directions, swarming over the cultivated and luxurious countries of the neighboring continent, or sending out stragglers on other more distant and formidable missions. Whether it be that their soaring spirits are impatient of the narrow quarters which nature has assigned them, or that there exists a supernumerary class of idlers, who, wearied with the monotony of home and the same dull round of dissipation, seek excitement in strange scenes and adventures; or whether they go abroad for the sunshine, of which they have heard so much but seen so little,—whatever be the cause, they furnish

a far greater number of tourists than all the world besides. We Americans, indeed, may compete with them in mere locomotion, for our familiarity with magnificent distances at home makes us still more indifferent to them abroad; but this locomotion is generally in the way of business, and the result is rarely shown in a book, unless, indeed, it be the leger.

Yet John Bull is, on many accounts, less fitted than most of his neighbors for the duties of a traveller. However warm and hospitable in his own home, he has a cold reserve in his exterior, a certain chilling atmosphere, which he carries along with him, that freezes up the sympathies of strangers, and which is only to be completely thawed by long and intimate acquaintance. But the traveller has no time for intimate acquaintances. He must go forward, and trust to his first impressions, for they will also be his last. Unluckily, it rarely falls out that the first impressions of honest John are very favorable. There is too much pride, not to say *hauteur,* in his composition, which, with the best intentions in the world, will show itself in a way not particularly flattering to those who come in contact with him. He goes through a strange nation, treading on all their little irritable prejudices, shocking their self-love and harmless vanities,—in short, going against the grain, and roughing up every thing by taking it the wrong way. Thus he draws out the bad humors of the people among whom he moves, sees them in their most unamiable and by no means natural aspect,—in short, looks on the wrong side of the tapestry.

What wonder if his notions are somewhat awry as to what he sees? There are, it is true, distinguished exceptions to all this,—English travellers who cover the warm heart—as warm as it is generally true and manly—under a kind and sometimes cordial manner; but they are the exceptions. The Englishman undoubtedly appears best on his own soil, where his national predilections and prejudices, or, at least, the intimation of them, are somewhat mitigated in deference to his guest.

Another source of the disqualification of John Bull as a calm and philosophic traveller is the manner in which he has been educated at home; the soft luxuries by which he has been surrounded from his cradle have made luxuries necessaries, and, accustomed to perceive all the machinery of life glide along as noiselessly and as swiftly as the foot of Time itself, he becomes morbidly sensitive to every temporary jar or derangement in the working of it. In no country since the world was made have all the appliances for mere physical and, we may add, intellectual indulgence been carried to such perfection as in this little island nucleus of civilization. Nowhere can a man get such returns for his outlay. The whole organization of society is arranged so as to minister to the comforts of the wealthy; and an Englishman, with the golden talisman in his pocket, can bring about him genii to do his bidding, and transport himself over distances with a thought, almost as easily as if he were the possessor of Aladdin's magic lamp and the fairy carpet of the Arabian Tales.

When he journeys over his little island, his com-

forts and luxuries cling as close to him as round his own fireside. He rolls over roads as smooth and well-beaten as those in his own park; is swept onward by sleek and well-groomed horses, in a carriage as soft and elastic, and quite as showy, as his own equipage; puts up at inns that may vie with his own castle in their comforts and accommodations, and is received by crowds of obsequious servants, more solicitous, probably, even than his own to win his golden smiles. In short, wherever he goes, he may be said to carry with him his castle, park, equipage, establishment. The whole are in movement together. He changes place, indeed, but changes nothing else. For travelling as it occurs in other lands,—hard roads, harder beds, and hardest fare,—he knows no more of it than if he had been passing from one wing of his castle to the other.

All this, it must be admitted, is rather an indifferent preparation for a tour on the Continent. Of what avail is it that Paris is the most elegant capital, France the most enlightened country on the European *terra firma*, if one cannot walk in the streets without the risk of being run over for want of a *trottoir*, nor move on the roads without being half smothered in a lumbering vehicle, dragged by ropes at the rate of five miles an hour? Of what account are the fine music and paintings, the architecture and art, of Italy, when one must shiver by day for want of carpets and sea-coal fires, and be thrown into a fever at night by the active vexations of a still more tormenting kind? The galled equestrian might as well be expected

to feel nothing but raptures and ravishment at the fine scenery through which he is riding. It is probable he will think much more of his own petty hurts than of the beauties of nature. A travelling John Bull, if his skin is not off, is at least so thin-skinned that it is next door to being so.

If the European neighborhood affords so many means of annoyance to the British traveller, they are incalculably multiplied on this side of the water, and that, too, under circumstances which dispose him still less to charity in his criticisms and constructions. On the Continent he feels he is among strange races, born and bred under different religious and political institutions, and, above all, speaking different languages. He does not necessarily, therefore, measure them by his peculiar standard, but allows them one of their own. The dissimilarity is so great in all the main features of national polity and society that it is hard to institute a comparison. Whatever be his contempt for the want of progress and perfection in the science of living, he comes to regard them as a distinct race, amenable to different laws, and therefore licensed to indulge in different usages, to a certain extent, from his own. If a man travels in China, he makes up his mind to chopsticks. If he should go to the moon, he would not be scandalized by seeing people walk with their heads under their arms. He has embarked on a different planet. It is only in things which run parallel to those in his own country that a comparison can be instituted, and charity too often fails where criticism begins.

Unhappily, in America the Englishman finds

these points of comparison forced on him at every step. He lands among a people speaking the same language, professing the same religion, drinking at the same fountains of literature, trained in the same occupations of active life. The towns are built on much the same model with those in his own land. The brick houses, the streets, the "sidewalks," the in-door arrangements, all, in short, are near enough on the same pattern to provoke a comparison. Alas for the comparison! The cities sink at once into mere provincial towns, the language degenerates into a provincial *patois*, the manners, the fashions, down to the cut of the clothes, and the equipages, all are provincial. The people, the whole nation—as independent as any, certainly, if not, as our orators fondly descant, the best and most enlightened upon earth —dwindle into a mere British colony. The traveller does not seem to understand that he is treading the soil of the New World, where every thing is new, where antiquity dates but from yesterday, where the present and the future are all, and the past nothing, where hope is the watchword, and "Go ahead!" the principle of action. He does not comprehend that when he sets foot on such a land he is no longer to look for old hereditary landmarks, old time-honored monuments and institutions, old families that have vegetated on the same soil since the Conquest. He must be content to part with the order and something of the decorum incident to an old community, where the ranks are all precisely and punctiliously defined, where the power is deposited by prescriptive right in certain

privileged hands, and where the great mass have the careful obsequiousness of dependants, looking for the crumbs that fall.

He is now among a new people, where every thing is in movement, all struggling to get forward, and where, though many go adrift in their wild spirit of adventure, and a temporary check may be sometimes felt by all, the great mass still advances. He is landed on a hemisphere where fortunes are to be made, and men are employed in getting, not in spending,—a difference which explains so many of the discrepancies between the structure of our own society and habits and those of the Old World. To know how to spend is itself a science; and the science of spending and that of getting are rarely held by the same hand.

In such a state of things, the whole arrangement of society, notwithstanding the apparent resemblance to that in his own country, and its real resemblance in minor points, is reversed. The rich proprietor, who does nothing but fatten on his rents, is no longer at the head of the scale, as in the Old World. The man of enterprise takes the lead in a bustling community, where action and progress, or at least change, are the very conditions of existence. The upper classes—if the term can be used in a complete democracy—have not the luxurious finish and accommodations to be found in the other hemisphere. The humbler classes have not the poverty-stricken, cringing spirit of hopeless inferiority. The pillar of society, if it want the Corinthian capital, wants also the heavy and superfluous base. Every man not only pro-

fesses to be, but is practically, on a footing of equality with his neighbor. The traveller must not expect to meet here the deference, or even the courtesies, which grow out of distinction of castes. This is an awkward dilemma for one whose nerves have never been jarred by contact with the *profane;* who has never been tossed about in the rough-and-tumble of humanity. It is little to him that the poorest child in the community learns how to read and write; that the poorest man can have—what Henry the Fourth so good-naturedly wished for the humblest of his subjects—a fowl in his pot every day for his dinner; that no one is so low but that he may aspire to all the rights of his fellow-men and find an open theatre on which to display his own peculiar talents.

As the tourist strikes into the interior, difficulties of all sorts multiply, incident to a raw and unformed country. The comparison with the high civilization at home becomes more and more unfavorable, as he is made to feel that in this land of promise it must be long before promise can become the performance of the Old World. And yet, if he would look beyond the surface, he would see that much here too has been performed, however much may be wanting. He would see lands over which the wild Indian roamed as a hunting-ground, teeming with harvests for the consumption of millions at home and abroad; forests, which have shot up, ripened, and decayed on the same spot ever since the creation, now swept away to make room for towns and villages thronged with an industrious population; rivers, which rolled on in

their solitudes, undisturbed except by the wandering bark of the savage, now broken and dimpled by hundreds of steamboats, freighted with the rich tribute of a country rescued from the wilderness. He would not expect to meet the careful courtesies of polished society in the pioneers of civilization, whose mission has been to recover the great continent from the bear and the buffalo. He would have some charity for their ignorance of the latest fashions of Bond Street, and their departure, sometimes, even from what, in the old country, is considered as the decorum and, it may be, decencies of life. But not so: his heart turns back to his own land, and closes against the rude scenes around him; for he finds here none of the soft graces of cultivation, or the hallowed memorials of an early civilization; no gray, weather-beaten cathedrals, telling of the Normans; no Gothic churches in their groves of venerable oaks; no moss-covered cemeteries, in which the dust of his fathers has been gathered since the time of the Plantagenets; no rural cottages, half smothered with roses and honeysuckles, intimating that even in the most humble abodes the taste for the beautiful has found its way; no trim gardens, and fields blossoming with hawthorn hedges and miniature culture; no ring fences, enclosing well-shaven lawns, woods so disposed as to form a picture of themselves, bright threads of silvery water, and sparkling fountains. All these are wanting, and his eyes turn with disgust from the wild and rugged features of nature, and all her rough accompaniments,—from man almost as

wild; and his heart sickens as he thinks of his own land and all its scenes of beauty. He thinks not of the poor who leave that land for want of bread and find in this a kindly welcome and the means of independence and advancement which their own denies them.

He goes on, if he be a splenetic Sindbad, discharging his sour bile on everybody that he comes in contact with, thus producing an amiable ripple in the current as he proceeds, that adds marvellously, no doubt, to his own quiet and personal comfort. If he have a true merry vein and hearty good nature, he gets on, laughing sometimes in his sleeve at others, and cracking his jokes on the unlucky pate of Brother Jonathan, who, if he is not very silly,—which he very often is,—laughs too, and joins in the jest, though it may be somewhat at his own expense. It matters little whether the tourist be Whig or Tory in his own land; if the latter, he returns, probably, ten times the Conservative that he was when he left it. If Whig, or even Radical, it matters not; his loyalty waxes warmer and warmer with every step of his progress among the republicans; and he finds that practical democracy, shouldering and elbowing its neighbors as it "goes ahead," is no more like the democracy which he has been accustomed to admire in theory, than the real machinery, with its smell, smoke, and clatter, under full operation, is like the pretty toy which he sees as a model in the Patent Office at Washington.

There seems to be no people better constituted for travellers, at least for recording their travel-

ling experiences, than the French. There is a mixture of frivolity and philosophy in their composition which is admirably suited to the exigencies of their situation. They mingle readily with all classes and races, discarding for the time their own nationality,—at least their national antipathies. Their pleasant vanity fills them with the desire of pleasing others, which most kindly reacts by their being themselves pleased:

"Pleased with himself, whom all the world can please."

The Frenchman can even so far accommodate himself to habits alien to his own, that he can tolerate those of the savages themselves, and enter into a sort of fellowship with them, without either party altogether discarding his national tastes and propensities. It is Chateaubriand, if we are not mistaken, who relates that, wandering in the solitudes of the American wilderness, his ears were most unexpectedly saluted by the sounds of a violin. He had little doubt that one of his own countrymen must be at hand; and in a wretched enclosure he found one of them, sure enough, teaching *Messieurs les sauvages* to dance. It is certain that this spirit of accommodation to the wild habits of their copper-colored friends gave the French traders and missionaries formerly an ascendency over the aborigines which was never obtained by any other of the white men.

The most comprehensive and truly philosophic work on the genius and institutions of this country, the best exposition of its social phenomena, its present condition, and probable future, are to be

found in the pages of a Frenchman. It is in the French language, too, that by far the greatest work has been produced on the great Southern portion of our continent, once comprehended under New Spain.

To write a book of travels seems to most people to require as little preliminary preparation as to write a letter. One has only to jump into a coach, embark on board a steamboat, minute down his flying experiences and hair-breadth escapes, the aspect of the country as seen from the interior of a crowded *diligence* or a vanishing rail-car, note the charges of the landlords and the quality of the fare, a dinner or two at the minister's, the last new play or opera at the theatre, and the affair is done. It is very easy to do this, certainly; very easy to make a bad book of travels, but by no means easy to make a good one. This requires as many and various qualifications as to make any other good book,—qualifications which must vary with the character of the country one is to visit. Thus, for instance, it requires a very different preparation and stock of accomplishments to make the tour of Italy, its studios and its galleries of art, or of Egypt, with its immortal pyramids and mighty relics of a primeval age, the great cemetery of antiquity, from what it does to travel understandingly in our own land, a new creation, as it were, without monuments, without arts, where the only study of the traveller—the noblest of all studies, it is true—is man. The inattention to this difference of preparation demanded by different places has led many a clever writer to make a very

worthless book, which would have been remedied had he consulted his own qualifications instead of taking the casual direction of the first steamboat or mail-coach that lay in his way.

There is no country more difficult to discuss in all its multiform aspects than Mexico, or, rather, the wild region once comprehended under the name of New Spain. Its various climates, bringing to perfection the vegetable products of the most distant latitudes; its astonishing fruitfulness in its lower regions, and its curse of barrenness over many a broad acre of its plateau; its inexhaustible mines, that have flooded the Old World with an ocean of silver, such as Columbus in his wildest visions never dreamed of,—and, unhappily, by a hard mischance, never lived to realize himself; its picturesque landscape, where the volcanic fire gleams amid wastes of eternal snow, and a few hours carry the traveller from the hot regions of the lemon and the cocoa to the wintry solitudes of the mountain fir; its motley population, made up of Indians, old Spaniards, modern Mexicans, mestizos, mulattoes, and zambos; its cities built in the clouds; its lakes of salt water, hundreds of miles from the ocean; its people, with their wild and variegated costume, in keeping, as we may say, with its extraordinary scenery; its stately palaces, half furnished, where services of gold and silver plate load the tables in rooms without a carpet, while the red dust of the bricks soils the diamond-sprinkled robes of the dancer; the costly attire of its higher classes, blazing with pearls and jewels; the tawdry magnificence of its

equipages, saddles inlaid with gold, bits and stirrups of massive silver, all executed in the clumsiest style of workmanship; its lower classes,—the men with their jackets glittering with silver buttons, and rolls of silver tinsel round their caps; the women with petticoats fringed with lace, and white satin shoes on feet unprotected by a stocking; its high-born fair ones crowding to the cockpit and solacing themselves with the fumes of a cigar; its churches and convents, in which all those sombre rules of monastic life are maintained in their primitive rigor which have died away before the liberal spirit of the age on the other side of the water; its swarms of *léperos,* the lazzaroni of the land; its hordes of almost legalized banditti, who stalk openly in the streets and render the presence of an armed escort necessary to secure a safe drive into the environs of the capital; its whole structure of society, in which a republican form is thrown over institutions as aristocratic and castes as nicely defined as in any monarchy of Europe; in short, its marvellous inconsistencies and contrasts in climate, character of the people, and face of the land,—so marvellous as, we trust, to excuse the unprecedented length of this sentence,—undoubtedly make modern Mexico one of the most prolific, original, and difficult themes for the study of the traveller.

Yet this great theme has found in Humboldt a writer of strength sufficient to grapple with it in nearly all its relations. While yet a young man, or, at least, while his physical as well as mental energies were in their meridian, he came over to

this country with an enthusiasm for science which was only heightened by obstacles, and with stores of it already accumulated that enabled him to detect the nature of every new object that came under his eye and arrange it in its proper class. With his scientific instruments in his hand, he might be seen scaling the snow-covered peaks of the Cordilleras, or diving into their unfathomable caverns of silver; now wandering through their dark forests in search of new specimens for his herbarium, now coasting the stormy shores of the Gulf and penetrating its unhealthy streams, jotting down every landmark that might serve to guide the future navigator, or surveying the crested Isthmus in search of a practicable communication between the great seas on its borders, and then, again, patiently studying the monuments and manuscripts of the Aztecs in the capital, or mingling with the wealth and fashion in its saloons; frequenting every place, in short, and everywhere at home:

"Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, ... omnia novit."

The whole range of these various topics is brought under review in his pages, and on all he sheds a ray, sometimes a flood, of light. His rational philosophy, content rather to doubt than to decide, points out the track which other adventurous spirits may follow up with advantage. No antiquary has done so much towards determining the original hives of the semi-civilized races of the Mexican plateau. No one, not even of the Spaniards, has brought together such an important

mass of information in respect to the resources, natural products, and statistics generally, of New Spain. His explorations have identified more than one locality and illustrated more than one curious monument of the people of Anahuac, which had baffled the inquiries of native antiquaries; and his work, while embodying the results of profound scholarship and art, is at the same time, in many respects, the very best *manuel du voyageur*, and, as such, has been most frequently used by subsequent tourists. It is true, his pages are sometimes disfigured by pedantry, ambitious display, learned obscurity, and other affectations of the man of letters. But what human work is without its blemishes? His various writings on the subject of New Spain, taken collectively, are one of those monuments which may be selected to show the progress of the species. Their author reminds us of one of the ancient athletæ, who descended into the arena to hurl the discus with a giant arm, that distanced every cast of his contemporaries.

There is one branch of his fruitful subject which M. de Humboldt has not exhausted, and, indeed, has but briefly touched on. This is the social condition of the country, especially as found in its picturesque capital. This has been discussed by subsequent travellers more fully, and Ward, Bullock, Lyons, Poinsett, Tudor, Latrobe, have all produced works which have for their object, more or less, the social habits and manners of the people. With most of them this is not the prominent object; and others of them, probably, have found

obstacles in effecting it to any great extent, from an imperfect knowledge of the language,—the golden key to the sympathies of a people,—without which a traveller is as much at fault as a man without an eye for color in a picture-gallery, or an ear for music at a concert. He may see and hear, indeed, in both; but *cui bono?* The traveller, ignorant of the language of the nation whom he visits, may descant on the scenery, the roads, the architecture, the outside of things, the rates and distances of posting, the dress of the people in the streets, and may possibly meet a native or two, half denaturalized, kept to dine with strangers, at his banker's. But as to the interior mechanism of society, its secret sympathies, and familiar tone of thinking and feeling, he can know no more than he could of the contents of a library by running over the titles of strange and unknown authors packed together on the shelves.

It was to supply this deficiency that the work before us, no doubt, was given to the public, and it was composed under circumstances that afforded every possible advantage and facility to its author. Although the initials only of the name are given in the title-page, yet, from these and certain less equivocal passages in the body of the work, it requires no Œdipus to divine that the author is the wife of the Chevalier Calderon de la Barca, well known in this country during his long residence as Spanish minister at Washington, where his amiable manners and high personal qualities secured him general respect and the regard of all who knew him. On the recognition

of the independence of Mexico by the mother-country, Señor Calderon was selected to fill the office of the first Spanish envoy to the republic. It was a delicate mission after so long an estrangement, and it was hailed by the Mexicans with every demonstration of pride and satisfaction. Though twenty years had elapsed since they had established their independence, yet they felt as a wayward son may feel who, having absconded from the paternal roof and set up for himself, still looks back to it with a sort of reverence, and, in the plenitude of his prosperity, still feels the want of the parental benediction. We, who cast off our allegiance in a similar way, can comprehend the feeling. The new minister, from the moment of his setting foot on the Mexican shore, was greeted with an enthusiasm which attested the popular feeling, and his presence in the capital was celebrated by theatrical exhibitions, bull-fights, illuminations, *fêtes* public and private, and every possible demonstration of respect for the new envoy and the country who sent him. His position secured him access to every place of interest to an intelligent stranger, and introduced him into the most intimate recesses of society, from which the stranger is commonly excluded, and to which, indeed, none but a Spaniard could, under any circumstances, have been admitted. Fortunately, the minister possessed, in the person of his accomplished wife, one who had both the leisure and the talent to profit by these uncommon opportunities, and the result is given in the work before us, consisting of letters to her family, which, it

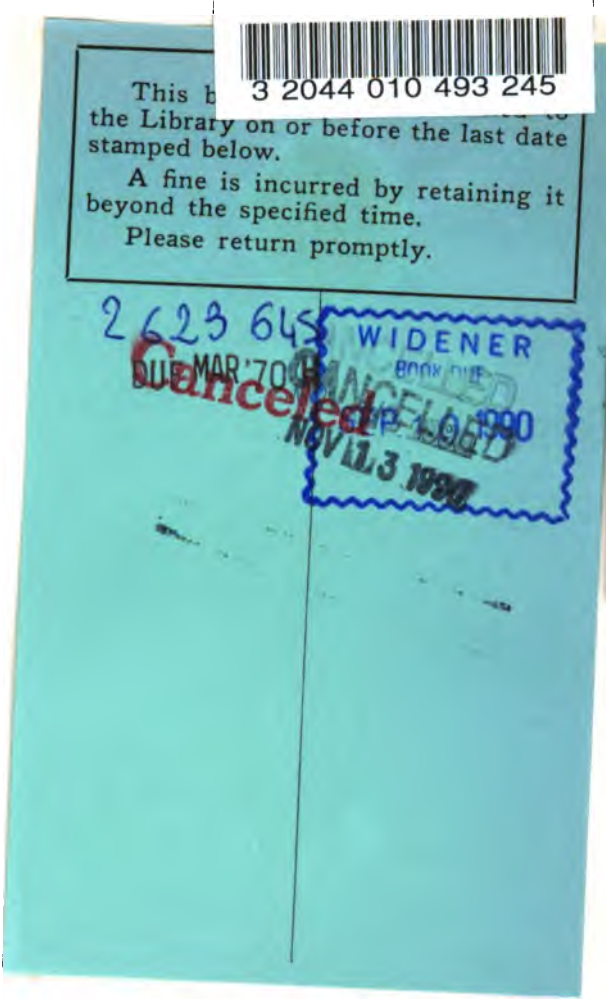
seems, since her return to the United States, have been gathered together and prepared for publication.*

* * * * * * *

The present volumes make no pretensions to enlarge the boundaries of our knowledge in respect to the mineral products of the country, its geography, its statistics, or, in short, to physical or political science. These topics have been treated with more or less depth by the various travellers who have written since the great publications of Humboldt. We have had occasion to become tolerably well acquainted with their productions; and we may safely assert that for spirited portraiture of society,—a society unlike any thing existing in the Old World or the New,—for picturesque delineation of scenery, for richness of illustration and anecdote, and for the fascinating graces of style, no one of them is to be compared with "Life in Mexico."

* The analysis of the work, with several pages of extracts from it, is here omitted, as containing nothing that is not already familiar to the English reader.

End of Volume I.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